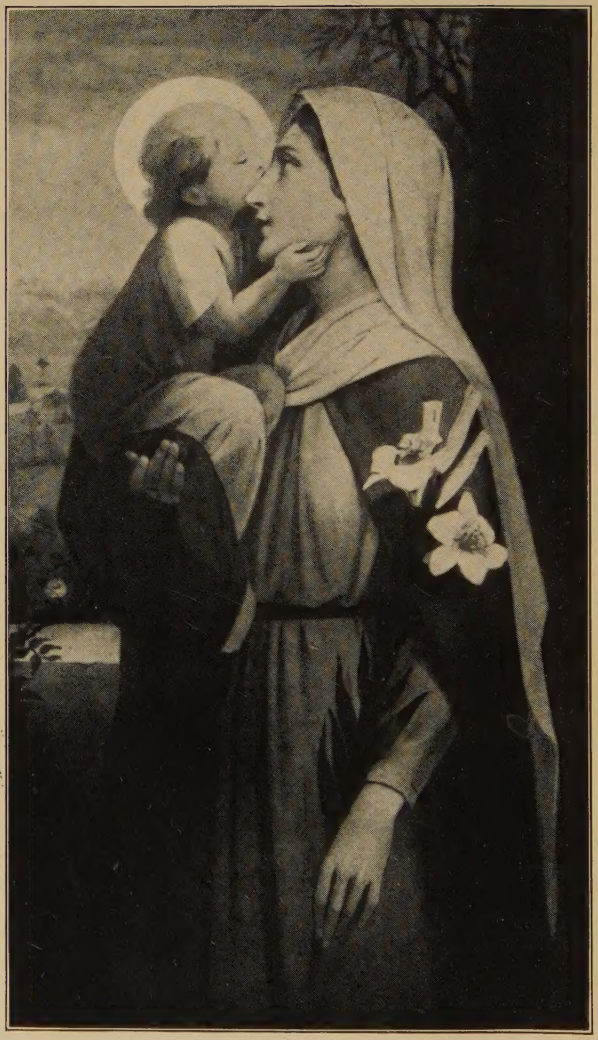
Our Lady's Titles

Albert Power, S.J.

OUR LADY'S TITLES



MATER CHRISTI

ORA PRO NOBIS

OUR LADY'S TITLES

BY

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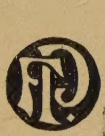
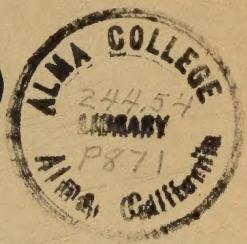
REVISED EDITION





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PREFACE

The German poet Novalis once wrote:

I see thee as enamoured Art
  Has pictured thee a thousand ways;
Yet, Mary, none shows thee so fair
  As visions thee mine inward gaze.

Like dreams, before that holier dream,
  The cares of earth and time depart,
And the dear vision keepeth still
  A heaven open in my heart.

Art has, indeed, vied with the Catholic Church in setting the Virgin Mother before the world; and it is impossible to estimate the beneficent influence which the multiplied manifestations of Mary's graces have exercised over men's thoughts and hearts. Christ Himself is the central sun of Christian art as He is of all our good; but art, just like the Church, has ever "found the Child with His Mother." Throughout the long record of the developments of poetry, painting, music and the rest, her beauty, clothed in the rays of His Divinity, has stimulated ever higher and more perfect achievements,

As the innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,
Moves all the labouring surges of the world.

While every week, almost, of the Church's calendar brought forward some new aspect of Mary's motherhood, virginity, beauty, power and beneficence,

sufferings, joys and glories, Catholic art and Catholic devotion have joined in a perpetual chorus like to that of the ancient hymn:

Omni die dic Mariae
Mea, laudes, anima,
Ejus gesta, ejus festa
Cole devotissima.

The theme was found inexhaustible and always delightful.

Novalis thought of pictures; Father Power thinks of these and of much more — of titles, invocations, teachings, the immemorial language of Christian prayer. Novalis did not, unhappily, write from the fulness of Catholic belief; Fr. Power brings up treasures of theology as well as of devout thought to bear upon his beloved theme. Nor do his pages lack poetic charm. "Mary's garden of roses is all fragrant with the breath of heaven"; these are words occurring in one of his meditations; and it would be no excessive panegyric to apply them to his book. Here are a thousand aspects of the Virgin Mother, as so many roses breathing celestial odours, lighted up with the resources of a loving heart and a well-stored and active mind. Many thousand readers, we trust, will take up the book with the hope of learning more about the chief master-piece (after the sacred Humanity of her Son) of God's creative activity; they will assuredly lay it down at the close with a sense of enrichment of both heart and intellect.

George O'Neill, S.J.

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READINGS FOR SPECIAL FEASTS

Numerals refer to the Order of Titles in the Litany.

		Titles
Jan. 6	Epiphany	8.22
Feb. 2	Presentation	19.31
" 11	Lourdes	27.34.46
March 19	Saint Joseph	16
" 25	Annunciation	2.3.17
Holy Week		14.19.20. & 2
Easter		20.26
Pentecost		5.21.24.25
Blessed Trinity		13.29
April 26	Good Counsel	12
May 24	Help of Christians	37
" 31	Our Lady of Sacred Heart	10
July 2	Visitation	32.40
" 16	Mount Carmel	39.41.44
Aug. 15	Assumption	23.30
" 19	Most Pure Heart	6.43
Sept. 8	Nativity	7
" 12	Holy name	48
" 15	Seven Dolours	19.20
" 24	Mercy	35.36
Oct. 2	Angels	9.38
" 7	Rosary	9.37.47
" 30	Christ the King	18.28.34
Nov. 21	Presentation	11.15
Dec. 8	Immaculate Conception	7.46
" 25	Christmas	4.33

Part One

MATERNAL TITLES

Part One

MATERNAL TITLES

1 HOLY MARY

Blessed art thou among women. — Luke I.: 28 and 42.

Our Lady's influence on the world has ever been a refining, elevating, ennobling one. She has lightened the load of millions, has brought peace and joy to tortured hearts, counsel to those in doubt, comfort to the sorrowing, repentance to sinners, and the love of God to cold and listless souls. What a work for God she has been doing since she came into being! Think of the multitude of Christians who this day will turn to Mary in their troubles and sorrows and perplexities, and not one will turn away unassisted! Think of the countless priests that have invoked her aid when their words seemed unavailing to move sinners to repentance, and have found a ready answer to their prayers! Think of the preachers without number that have found their strength and support in her intercession; the saints untold that have wept before her, and besought her help to fight on in God's cause! And, lastly, think of the myriads of men and women sunk in sin who, stirred with a feeling of shame for their deplorable state, have turned in their misery to Mary, fallen at her merci-

ful feet, and found comfort in the thought of her motherly intercession!

Her Sinless Soul. Mary loves God with such intense fervour that all her prayers and efforts are directed to winning others to love Him, too. And one of the motives, we may be sure, that will most strongly urge her to pray for sinners is her own spotless and stainless innocence. She is sinless, conceived immaculate; free from every least stain of sin all through life. To understand what this privilege means, we need to understand what sin means: and though the commission of sin is, unfortunately, so familiar to us, still we realise very imperfectly what the real nature of sin, what the vileness and hatefulness and deformity of it is. Horror for sin is a great grace from God: a grace which He gives to His saints in deep measure, since knowledge of sin is the only sure rock of sanctity. We read that the Curé of Ars would shake with terror when meditating on God's punishments for sin. St. Teresa compares the soul in mortal sin to a loathsome corpse, a vile, horrible, putrid thing, that must be buried away out of sight. We see the havoc of sin even in this world, how it ruins men's lives, destroys families, brings on disease and beggary and misfortune. And yet, paint it as we may, we have barely touched on the fringe of the subject.

Her Love for Sinners. To penetrate fully into its essence we should go deep into God's Being, and realise what infinite sanctity means, what it is to offend an Infinite Being. Certain it is that God's judgment cannot be exaggerated. He cannot lay too

much stress on sin, or overstate the case about it. And He tells us that sin is the only real evil: that life, health, comfort, are of little consequence when sin is in question, that mortal sin deserves eternal punishment. Now such is sin, the one black, evil spot in creation. And that evil thing, that foul, polluting monster, never laid finger on the Immaculate Mother of God. No wonder we rejoice at her spotless purity, we who are so deeply stained, who have rendered ourselves so hateful and vile in God's eyes, by our evil acts. No wonder we honour her Immaculate Conception, or the privilege of coming into being without any taint of original sin. Mary knows better than anyone else what this privilege of spotless purity means, she realises better than anyone else the terrible nature of sin; and so, more than anyone else is she anxious to save us from it. Seeing what sin means, seeing how the presence of mortal sin pollutes and defiles a soul, surely she who so loves God will work strenuously to save our souls from it. And if we dread to approach her just because she is so spotless, if we poor sinners shrink back from entering the fragrant precincts of the Crib where she holds the Babe in her arms, let us recall the merciful title which the trust of ages has given to her: Refuge of Sinners. Let us remember that her sorrow for poor, wandering souls is in proportion to her burning love for Him who created those souls, and that her one longing wish is to make us to be good friends with the Divine Child whom she holds in her arms, and then our fears will vanish.

2 HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? — Luke I.: 43.

Mary is a triumph of grace. Her beauty and greatness are in the supernatural order; it is her relationship to God that constitutes her title to our admiration and love. Hence, the intense and extraordinary devotion to Mary which stands out as a marked characteristic of the Catholic Church is a proof of the deep spiritual insight of the Christian mind. Just as appreciation of great poetry is proof of intellectual development, so the enthusiastic devotion of the Catholic mind to God's masterpiece is the effect and proof of the spiritual elevation of the Church's children. The hard, unspiritual world denounces this enthusiasm, and calls it bitter names; but it has ever been the fate of the finer spirits in this world to be mocked at by those that do not understand or sympathise with their insight. Poets have often been misunderstood, neglected, treated with harshness or contempt by their contemporaries. They are a voice crying in the wilderness, and meeting with no response.

Mary's soul was the most exquisite product of prayer. We were made by God to pray, to hold intercourse with Himself. Most people leave unvisited and neglected the inner chamber of the soul which is God's trysting-place; and so, like a disused, pent-up room, it is full of darkness and cobwebs and dust. Prayer opens the shutters, and lets the sunshine, which is God Himself, stream into that inner sanctuary.

The Power of Prayer. In Mary's soul the sun streamed ever steadily from the first. She was the most prayerful soul that ever existed. All graces come in answer to strong desires on the part of some loving soul. The whole of Christ's teaching on prayer leads to this conclusion. The iron-bound, ponderous gates, that seem so fastly shut, swing softly back at God's command when He hears the knock of humble petition. And, when the gates open, lo! God Himself! His own radiant, eternal, incomprehensible Being and Essence presented to our gaze. "Knock," said Jesus, "and it shall be opened to you."

Now, Mary knew this, and her humble, burning petitions went up to God incessantly for the coming of the Great Deliverer. The world was in a miserable state of wickedness. It reminded Mary, perhaps, of the days before the Flood, of which she read in Genesis. She knew something of the paganism of the Roman world, and she longed for the day of deliverance: for the coming of the Saviour, of the great Prophet spoken of in the Old Testament and in tradition. And earnestly, trustfully, persistently she kept knocking and pleading with her Divine Lover.

And at last the answer comes the overwhelming, undreamt-of answer!

The world has faded from view, time and space have disappeared, Mary is alone with the angel, and is drinking in his wonderful words, every syllable piercing her through, and burning itself into her soul. And what he tells her is that she is God's favoured one, full of grace, full of that beauty which is alone valued

by God. This must have been like the first meeting of the soul with God after death, when it hears God assuring it that all is well! So in this ecstatic moment Mary hears from the angel the assurance that she is beloved by God, "Full of grace," living in the sunshine of God's favour; and then, that she is to become Mother of the Messiah. The hour has come at last, her prayer has been heard, and God is about to visit His people.

Mary's Prayer. We have in St. Luke an account of this converse of Mary's soul with the angel, and so have a little glimpse of how God dealt with her in prayer. For this was prayer of the most perfect kind. Prayer is the link of communication between the soul and God, and all through life Mary was guided by the Holy Spirit, at one time through an angel, again through the mouth of a saint like Simeon, more constantly through St. Joseph, as when bidden to go and reside in the land of Egypt, and then still more directly by the sacred and blessed lips of Jesus Himself. The Annunciation was the trumpet call heralding a new era in her life of prayer, for from that day Jesus was with Mary in a new way, speaking to her, guiding her, shaping her soul, lovingly perfecting His great masterpiece.

Up to that day God had dealt with her as with other souls, through the ordinary channels of grace; but on that day Mary entered into a new order — she entered into that life of special relationship to God which arose from the fact of becoming His Mother.

3 HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS

Hail, full of grace. — Luke I.: 28.

Amongst the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, angels' visits are mentioned in five — viz., in the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Agony, the Resurrection, the Ascension. In all they are sent as messengers of consolation. In the Agony in the Garden the angel comes to Jesus Himself to whisper words of comfort. There, as ever, the angels are messengers of God, bringing God's peace to suffering souls. They are vicars of the Holy Spirit. God's action in the soul is ever to give it peace and consolation; and in His goodness He wishes His creatures to share in His own beneficent activity, and so He uses His angels to convey His divine thoughts to His friends.

God's Great Secret. And first and foremost to His dearest saint and best loved child, the holy maiden of Nazareth, He sent His glorious messenger Gabriel to convey to her that supremest of consoling messages, the message of Jesus' coming. This was the greatest secret that God ever whispered to a human heart. We know the joy of conveying good news, just as we know how heavy a task it is to impart news that may break the heart of the hearer. So for this joyful errand God chooses His great angel. How willingly the great Spirit leaped forth to accomplish the divine behest! And then how gently he breaks the great tidings! It was the most delicate as well as the most wonderful message that one created intellect ever conveyed to another. Mary was, after all, but human, though buoyed up by a strong sea of

grace. Might not the strain of this sublime message be too great even for her? To accept it will demand extraordinary faith as well as marvellous trust and a love that would flinch from nothing.

The Call. To be Mother of the Messias, to be the Mother of God, was the position offered to her. She was a vowed virgin, and the clear light of God burning in her soul had sealed irrevocably her resolve to live the virgin's life. She knew, as no other had ever known, the value in God's eyes of the white lily of spotless purity: she knew what this gift means in a soul, how it delights the Heart of God. And with all the fiery intensity of her nature she clung to that vision of beauty, and claimed it for herself. And now suddenly this message sweeps like a storm into her life. To be Mother of Christ! There leaped up before her the glorious vision of the greatness and beauty of such a Motherhood, and what it meant to be instrumental in giving Him to the world who was to be its Saviour and Redeemer. And her faith stood forth for the conflict. How would this impossibility be arranged in God's providence? How will He reconcile Motherhood with Virginity?

God's Answer. Then softly, like stealing music, from the angel's peace-giving lips the undreamt-of solution came. The Infinitely Wise and All-powerful has ways we know not of. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee"; this Motherhood is to unite Mary to the Divinity in an inexpressibly wonderful way: for the Son that she is to engender is not a human person, but the *Person of God.*

That is the tremendous solution of the problem. The Person of God is to be her Son, and therefore His coming, so far from bringing taint to her virginity, will consecrate it in an indescribably perfect way. The Person of God is to come through the action of the Sanctifier. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, as the cloud overshadowed the ark in the wilderness; and because of this wonderful coming of God's power upon thee, the Son engendered miraculously in thy womb — so miraculously that thy radiant purity will be enhanced by this Motherhood — this Son will be God Himself."

Verbum Caro Factum. And then Mary's simple, penetrating word is spoken, under the stress of this great visitation: "Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." She is annihilated in God's presence, swallowed up in the majesty of this mighty utterance; she can but breathe this prayer: "His will be done."

Meanwhile, the angel and all heaven are bent in adoration before the new creation that has come into being at Mary's simple fiat. For then "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

4 MOTHER OF CHRIST

Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
The world will bid Him flee,
Too busy to heed His gentle voice,
Too blind His charms to see.

Then, Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
Come with thy Babe to me;
Tho' the world be cold, my heart shall hold
A shelter for Him and thee.

(FROM A NOTRE DAME HYMN.)

We, Christ's lovers, do not wish to treat this Mother, with the Child at her breast, as the world actually treated, and still treats, her. If it were a case of an ordinary human mother, with her newly-born babe in her arms, innocence and goodness in her face, the first flush of the mother's dignity on her cheek, yet in great poverty and distress, men would be moved to pity, and would feel anxious to help her. Passers-by that gazed upon Mary's face saw there the marks of suffering and want and exposure; but they saw, too, the reflection of heaven itself, since they saw the face of one whose soul knew no sin. They saw, too, that her cheeks were aflame with joy. For the angel's words were ringing down in her soul, telling of the Babe's destiny.

Who is this Child? We who gaze with eyes of faith upon the Mother and Child have indeed before us the tender and moving spectacle of a young mother with her new-born child. But we see infinitely more than that. For this mother is the Mother of God, and this Child is the Incarnate Lord of the universe. When we realise who the Child is, we begin to realise better who His Mother is; and when we understand that well, we shall very intensely indeed, and with awe and reverence, with humility and devotion, pray thus: "Come with thy Babe to me. Tho' the world be cold, my heart shall

hold a shelter for Him and thee." This earnest petition may be said to fill up the lives of the saints. They do not care much for the things that interest people on earth — politics, news, war, marriage, sports, pageants, and the rest. The reason is that they are absorbed in one supreme topic; they are studying the coming of God to men. And they have just one incessant longing; it is this: "Mother of Christ, come with thy Babe to *me*." They fling wide the gates of the soul to bid Mother and Child enter in, and they labour assiduously to decorate that soul, so that He may be pleased when He comes.

The Divine Guest. A hostess works hard to please her guests, spares no trouble in preparing for them, especially when the visitors are dearly-loved friends. So the saints and lovers of Jesus labour to make His visit to the soul delightful to Himself. Since it is they who invite Him to come, they feel obliged to offer Him the best welcome in their power. Our heart is a shelter for Jesus provided that the lamp of faith fills it with light to exclude the darkness of scepticism and unbelief, provided that it is warmed by the blazing fire of hope, and also that we offer to our guests the food and drink of charity. A well-lit room, a blazing fire, and a well-stored table are things that a hostess prepares for her guests. If the light is bad, if the fire burns low, or the food runs short, the feast is not counted a success! To prevent such a mishap, Jesus Himself on a certain occasion supplied a goodly store of wine by a miracle. When we say: "My heart shall hold a shelter for Him and thee," we are undertaking to see that our hearts shall

be illuminated with the lamp of faith, trimmed and burning brightly; that they shall be warmed with the fire of hope, blazing gaily on the hearth, the flames leaping joyously heavenwards; that there shall be spread for this heavenly Guest good store of the only food He craves for, the bread of divine charity.

The Test of Faith. How is it with me in this matter of welcoming Jesus? How do I play the part of host? Is my whole existence illuminated, transformed by the lamp of faith? A good test of the reality, activity, vividness, and energy of my faith is this: Am I at peace? Do I walk along the road of duty with quiet confidence, leaving all my cares to God? If so, I am living a life of faith. Worldly people rely on riches, friends, influence, talents, energy of action, and other visible, tangible forces. People of faith rely on God. So far as we fail to do this we are not walking by the light of faith. Worldlings are in darkness, journeying from one flickering street lamp to another, and rejoicing in their artificial radiance; God's children walk in the light of the lordly masterful sun, are guided by the light which is God Himself.

Hope. Then about my hope? Can it, by any stretch of language, be called a veritable *fire* that warms and comforts the soul? Or am I in a state of spiritual frost, my heart hard and unmanageable, like the ground in winter time? If so, where is the fire of hope? Heat is necessary for our physical life; hope is just as necessary for our spiritual life. Hence Jesus is ever exhorting us to hope. His message is pre-

eminently one of hope. He comes to bring tidings of great joy, and joy and hope go together. Am I morose, gloomy, self-reflecting, occupied with my own troubles? Or am I a fountain of joy to those around me?

Charity. Finally about the food of charity, the food Christ craves for, the delicate, heavenly, fragrant bread of brotherly love, do I supply it to Him? Is He well content to come and dine with me, for the delicacy of my viands? Or does He come only to hunger in my abode? And if, perchance, I find that He comes at a time when the bread has run short, do I hasten at once to storm at my sleeping friend's house to demand bread to entertain my Guest? He Himself (in the story) teaches us how imperious is the duty of feeding a hungry guest, picturing for us the host at midnight disturbing his friend rather than send the visitor to bed unrefreshed after his journey. He often comes to us asking for entertainment. How often He is sent away starving and disappointed! And from souls that He has lavished much kindness upon! Are we careful not to renew for Him the bitter memories of His first night in Bethlehem?

5 MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. — Luke I.: 35.

This wonderful title of Mother of Divine Grace is one that is only applicable to the Virgin Mother of

God. She is truly Mother of Grace because she is truly Mother of Him who is the Creator of Grace, of Him who is source and author of all the graces bestowed upon us; since by His sacred death Jesus merited grace for all creatures, merited our elevation to the supernatural order, merited for each of us the right to the Vision of God in heaven.

Actual Grace. Actual grace means the thoughts and motions of the will which the Holy Spirit (sent by Jesus) produces in our souls in order thereby to guide us gently along the road that leads to God. All actual grace is given to stir us up to more perfect faith, to make us live the supernatural life more intensely. It is our thoughts that God would control and direct, and through our thoughts He would sway our wills to make us choose aright in the great alternatives that are set before us day by day, our choice with regard to which must decide our fate and our place in eternity. We are living amidst the rush and hurry of a great universe, and the supreme danger for us is that we spend our life distracted by its noise, and forget God, to whom we are hastening.

The Light of Faith. Our troubles come from listening too intensely to the din of time, allowing passing cares to absorb our attention. We are what our thoughts make us; our happiness consists in thinking aright. The Beatific Vision is an act of the soul; it means contemplating and loving God in an indescribably perfect way. Grace is like light in this sense, that it reveals to us the world of God. Just as a blind man moves about the material world, but is ignorant of its beauty, extent, and order: so the man

who has not the interior sight of the soul, lives and moves and has his being in the universe of God, but has only a vague, dim knowledge of Him — such imperfect, groping knowledge as the blind man has of the world. An act of Faith is a direct and special effect of God's omnipotence, it is an act as impossible to the mere natural intellect as vision is to a blind man, it is as *unthinkable* without grace as vision is without light.

Many people make a poor use of light. Light was given to reveal this world's beauty, to throw open to us the endless joys that the exquisite and glorious perfections of the universe afford to our contemplation. Yet many people know little or nothing of the natural beauty either of the world of nature or the world of literature. Education is meant to train us to use our eyes well: it teaches us in reading to read the best: in art to gaze willingly on what is truly beautiful: in studying nature to seek the loveliest that nature has to give.

The Music of God's Voice. So in the world of grace many neglect to use and develop the faculty of vision called Faith. A man or woman with highly developed faith, gazing intently into the world of God and living up to that vision, is called a saint. Hence we understand better the meaning of the young Carmelite's programme, "Je veux passer ma vie a Vous écouter," though she uses the metaphor of *hearing* rather than *sight.* She will listen ever to the music of God's Being. In order to listen intently to a faint sound (even though the faint sound be that of the cannon's roar at a distant battle, or the thunder of

the ocean) one must keep quite still, and hush every disturbing noise. The Voice of God, though it is actually the tempestuous voice of the Ocean of Infinite Being, sounds faint amidst the roar of creatures: just as distant bells, though never so sweet, are drowned by the commonplace sounds of daily life. And so the saintly child stole away from the noise and bustle, and hushed her being to catch the faint, sweet music of the Infinite Voice.

"*The Sea.*" One can picture Xenophon's soldiers hearkening to the distant murmur that told them the sea was near, as they marched towards the Euxine. They halted, and in utter silence gazed northwards whence the slight moan was borne on the breeze; then pressed on filled with new energy after their heartbreaking pilgrimage through the Kurdish mountains; they push up a high hill, foot by foot they win its crest, and lo! stretching away as far as eye can reach, is the blazing silver mirror of the Euxine, resplendent in the morning sun. "The sea! the sea!" was all their cry.

This story of Xenophon and his Ten Thousand may be taken as a type of the soul's wanderings amidst the hostile forces that try to keep the soul from God. When we finally get through the Karduchians, and climb the last hill, and the great Vision breaks upon us, we too shall be lost in joy, and keep on crying one word for ever: "God, my God!"

6 MOTHER MOST PURE

Woman, behold thy son. — John xix., 26.

"When Jesus had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He said to His Mother, 'Woman, behold thy son.'" Because Jesus *loves* the soul He commends it to His Mother's care, telling her to treat that soul as *her own child.* And such a word of commendation from Jesus is a law to Mary. "And to the disciple whom He loved (and because He loved him) He said: 'Behold thy mother.'" Look upon her as your mother, treat her as a mother, and expect from her the tenderness, gentleness, compassion, that experience tells us may be expected from a mother's heart.

Devotion to the Pure Heart of Mary is, therefore, devotion to the Maternal Heart of Mary, to this heart that embraces, in a love wider than the ocean, all the souls that Jesus died to save. Just as devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus means devotion to Him who is the supreme lover of mankind, the greatest of all lovers, so devotion to the Heart of Mary means devotion to her who loves us with a mother's tenderness.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus. We speak habitually of the *Sacred* Heart of Jesus, the Heart that is ineffably sacred, because it is the Heart of the Word Incarnate. His Heart is holy with the uncreated holiness of God, because it is actually the Heart of God Himself. It is sacred because consecrated by its union with the Divinity. "For Him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi., 27).

The Most Pure Heart of Mary. Now, Mary's Heart is pure and spotless because sanctified beyond all other hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, fitting it to be the dwelling-place of the sacred and divinely-sanctified Heart of Jesus. The Catholic Church, therefore, pays boundless respect to the Heart of the Mother, because it was the dwelling-place of the Son. Mary is the spotless tabernacle, the earthly resting-place prepared for the Son of God.

And in His dying moments Jesus gives her a mother's heart for those whom He loves. She is bidden to regard as her son the "disciple whom Jesus loves." If saints have overflowed with tenderness for human souls, even when steeped in sin, just because "Jesus loved them," how must Mary's heart be filled with tenderness for Christ's little ones! How great, then, should be our confidence in her motherly love for us! Remember that, if Mary received a special commission from the dying lips of Jesus to regard as her children those whom Jesus loves, we, too, have received a commission from Him to regard and treat her as a mother. After that He saith to the disciple, "Behold thy Mother." And we are told how St. John acted. "From that hour the disciple took her to his own"; she became part of his daily life, she was henceforward as a mother in his household.

Our Mother. So should we also take Mary into our daily life. She should manage our household for us, she should preside over the affairs of our soul, which is the household in which God reigns. In that interior mansion the busy life of prayer, and worship,

and devotion should proceed in an orderly way, just as in the life of a regular household. In the early hours of the morning takes place the supreme event of the day — viz., the visit of the Master and Lord of the Mansion. With Him come radiance and joy, light and strength and comfort. He comes to give us the kiss of peace, to fold us to His Sacred Heart, in order to tell us of His love. To know that love is the supremest of all facts for each one of us. To be sure of that, to taste that reality, is religion, is peace on earth, and is the essence of heaven, since heaven means the perfect realisation that God loves you.

7 MOTHER MOST CHASTE

Thou art all fair, my Beloved, and there is not a spot in thee. — Cant. iv., 7.

God communicates in wonderful ways with our poor souls in this world. How did He deal with the soul of His spotless Mother? The Church has kept on tiptoe all the centuries trying to catch a glimpse of Mary's greatness, and trying in some imperfect way to describe the vision she beholds! The Church takes the events of Mary's life one by one during the year, and concentrates her children's thoughts on them, in order that by close attention to each they may gradually grow in knowledge of Mary. In December, she bids us think of the moment when Mary's soul was created by God. The great work

of shaping souls is going on hour by hour, God's Almighty Power drawing out of nothingness these wonderful spiritual essences that are to go on existing for ever. A hundred thousand are flung daily into the press of life to fight for an eternal crown; entering the lists to struggle for the possession of God Himself. But in that teeming workshop a moment of supreme importance came when Mary's soul was to be fashioned. On that moment the Church fixes her gaze, when the feast of the Immaculate Conception comes, and she bids us mark how different Mary's soul is from all the other countless souls that come into being; how her soul is burning with the white fire of God's grace against the dark background of the rest of Adam's sin-stained race. Other souls come into being with the curse of Adam's guilt, with a mark of reprobation and outlawry upon them. But Mary's soul, at its first creation, already shares in the marvellous beauty of God's own radiant nature: her soul comes like a peerless bride clothed in majesty, shining bright in the blaze of God's Eternal Being; whereas other souls are united with their earthly habitation in chains of sin, like captives led to a prison tower.

Her Spotless Soul. There was joy before the Angels of God on that December day some twenty years before our era. Augustus sat on his throne, and at Rome and other centres of civilisation the fashionable world was living its life of self-indulgence, rushing madly and heedlessly through life; and amidst the orgies of the Empire this Soul was created: and God looked down with infinite complacency, for this

was to be His own Mother! Then Mary was born, and there was merry-making in the Galilean village: neighbours came to admire the Babe. Little they knew what that Babe was in God's eyes! Mary grew up, a sweet and lovely child, fair as the flowers around her that flung their beauty on the winds under the hot Syrian sun. And her *Soul* — how sweet and lovely *that* was to God! How she bloomed in the Garden of God's Roses! The story of the saints' lives gives us a glimpse into the workings of grace in innocent souls; who shall tell us what took place in Mary's soul during those years? The chastity of Mary's heart! The purity — the stainless fragrance of her love for God! Who can tell us about that? It is a secret that God is keeping for heaven. He must not tell us everything here below! If people read eagerly the story of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, how eagerly shall we listen to the story of Mary's life by and bye in heaven! How intently shall we study the growth and development of this greatest, most perfect, most beautiful and fragrant of all the Soul-Flowers that have bloomed in His garden!

8 MOTHER UNDEFILED

We have seen His Star in the East, and are come to adore Him. — Matt. ii.

His star; He is Lord of the stars! This little Child, before whom those Eastern Sages are bent in lowly reverence, presenting their perfumed gifts:

red gold from India, aromatic incense and rich myrrh; this Child is owner and proprietor of the stars! Those jewels sparkling nightly on the vesture of the sky are His; His is the Hand that polished them, gave them their lustre of fire and set them in their places. It is His own star, a star sent by Him, that has brought these men to His feet. We are influenced strongly by visible, sensible manifestations of God's Presence in the universe. At rare intervals His Hand stirs behind the veil and men are startled into vivid consciousness of the awful Presence.

Loyola. "We have seen His star, and have come to *adore* Him." Ignatius of Loyola, dancing gaily through life, in love with the dear world, suddenly catches glimpses of God athwart the lives of dead saints, and presently the proud Spanish officer is seeking the *Child* to adore Him. The rest of his life, from that year, 1521, until his death, thirty-five years later, was one long act of adoration. So with Francis of Assisi three hundred years earlier. So with Saul of Tarsus, earlier still. God's star blazed suddenly in his life, Jesus Himself, the Star of the Godhead, shone upon him and Saul fell in adoration: "Who art thou, Lord? What wouldst thou have me to do?" And Paul spent the rest of his life adoring Jesus. So, perhaps, with ourselves. It is so wonderful that God, the infinite Being, should guide us by special marvellous uses of created things, in order to lead us to Himself that we may adore Him. It is *His* light that is shining in our soul when our hearts are burning within us and we feel stirred to love and to do great things for Him.

Perfect Purity. It was this same burning star of grace that shone so intensely on the soul of Mary, God's Mother, and taught her from the very beginning the value, in God's eyes, of perfect chastity of soul, and that clear vision braced her will to cling to perfect purity of heart all through life with the full intensity of her perfect will. Chastity means a turning away from the attraction of created things in order to concentrate the affections of the soul on the uncreated Beauty of God. For that, a great grace is required. Hence the Church bids us pray incessantly to God, through His holy Mother, for the grace of perfect purity of body and soul. We pray that the star of God's light may guide us safely amidst the ever-present attractions of creatures, that, threading our way safely, we may finally find the Babe with His Mother, and so may reach the blessed consummation of union with Him, for which chastity is the preparation. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

The Star of Bethlehem. The Magi come to Jerusalem and demand: "Where is the new-born King?" One would expect them to realise the danger of such a question in the city of Herod. Yet they seem very artlessly to ask it, as not thinking to raise a storm. When the star reappeared, what extraordinary consolation filled their souls! "They rejoiced with exceeding great joy." One can realise their radiant looks, the happy smile of content, the soft, kind words, the beating hearts, as they stride along in the wake of the light thus marvellously guiding them. And this intense light leads them to

the Child. He manifested Himself to them and touched their souls to faith, made their hearts burn within them, as in the case of the two disciples going to Emmaus, and so they rejoiced exceedingly.

This is a picture of our interior life. When God takes us in hand, when His star shines in our soul and we draw nigh to Him, then joy indescribable comes to us; and we fall down and adore Him, because we feel His presence, we recognise Him and are filled with awe. What will Heaven be, if a touch of His hand, a glance of His eye can so lift us here below? If a word of His mouth thrills our soul, what will His glorious, unveiled Presence effect? "So these things (i.e., all created beauty) are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job xxvi, 14.) As crashing thunder to a whisper, so is God's mighty Being in its reality, as compared with the mere hint of His existence which we have in the universe, with all its grandeur.

9 MOTHER INVIOLATE

My Spouse is a garden enclosed. — Canticle iv., 12.

The Divine Office speaks of "Mary's Rosarium," Mary's Garden of Roses, whither she brings us to let us taste the fragrance of Christ's life. The *walks* in the garden are the mysteries: on each separate walk are growing various species of heavenly roses which Mary wishes us to see and admire. The celestial

aroma of these flowers is to lift our souls above the things of earth and make us yearn for God. Mary wishes to cause in us this thirst for God, although she knows this desire for the Infinite will bring us pain, will make the world distasteful to us; yet she knows, too, that this blessed thirst is the soul's salvation and healing. The soul is a spirit, and can be satisfied only with the Infinite Spirit. "Deep calls to deep," the deep of the soul which is so profound that no created good can fill it, calls to the deep Essence of God, which, being infinite, can satisfy every longing. And the Rosary is a heaven-sent means for stirring up this longing of the soul, and awakening it to its true interests. Men would dream away the hours in the lotus-laden atmosphere of created things, but if they continue sleeping thus they will be lost to God. And so, Ulysses-like, we must be up and away, and out on to the dancing waves where the soul is free!

Mary's Roses. Mary's Garden of Roses is all fragrant with the breath of heaven. Jesus, the God-Man, with the light of heaven in His eyes and the sweetness of the Divinity permeating His Being, is the subject of our contemplation in this garden. Mary has one supreme subject of interest to occupy us with — viz., her Divine Son, His life, virtues, teaching, principles, interests. Hence, day by day she invites us to this blessed garden, to rest by its fountains and running brooks, and breathe the scent of its flowers. We go there to learn more about the soul of Jesus. For we study our Lord's external life as the manifestation of His soul, just as we are interested in all external human action because of the soul

behind it. It is souls we are ever thinking about, it is souls that attract or repel us. Now the soul of Jesus and His thoughts and affections we wish to study. The soul of Jesus is different from all other souls in this, that it is bathed in the glory of the Divinity, being personally united to the Word: it is the soul, sinless and infinitely holy, of God Himself. When Mary Magdalen, the sinner, wept at His feet, it was the tenderness of His soul, the gentle affection and mercy of His soul, that moved her and caused a fountain of tears to flow from the heart that had so long been deadened by worldly pleasures. So Mary, His Mother, wishes to bring us into contact with His Sacred Soul, and so leads us to the various scenes of His life.

The Angel's greeting. In October, the Month of the Rosary, is also celebrated the Feast of the Holy Angels, and we may combine the devotion to them with our devotion to the Rosary. For we may claim the Angels' help in a special way when saying the Rosary. It is really an Angel's prayer, since the "Ave Maria" is Gabriel's greeting; and the Angels are given to us as our friends in order to help us to pray. See how they trooped down joyously to help the shepherds to pray at Bethlehem! since to send the shepherds to the crib and make them return praising and blessing God for all they had heard and seen was surely to teach them to *pray*. In like manner, the Angels will surely come to help us when we would have tidings of Him and seek a sign whereby we may identify Him. And with especial willingness will our own Angel Guardian come to do us this kindness.

Seeking Gold. To pray is, after all, just this, *to seek to find Jesus.* And just as the seeker after gold will ask an experienced miner to guide him, so when looking for the rich gold that is Jesus we turn to those experienced Angel guides who have already found Him and are in happy possession of Him in order that they may teach us their secret. For the snares and pitfalls and dangers by the way are many, and we see in the case of the shepherds and the Magi that supernatural guidance was necessary to reach Jesus. The world is full of *spies* from the devil's army, and unless our intelligence department is properly worked, we shall be betrayed to the enemy by those traitors. Now, our intelligence department officers are the Angels; they it is must warn us and save us from surprises. We are groping our way through life, playing our part in a huge battle, knowing very inadequately how the fight is going; and our Angels must help us or we shall be lost. If God has willed to appoint to each an Angel Protector, you may be sure there was good reason and urgent necessity for it. Men walk along gaily, blind to their dangers. But God is solicitous for us. Hence the Saints had much devotion to their Angels. St. Frances of Rome had a constant vision of her Angel Guardian. So let us pray God to give us more faith in the existence of our Guardian Angel, and more devotion to this heavenly friend, that through his help we may daily say our Rosary more perfectly.

10 MOTHER MOST AMIABLE

Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem. — Canticle vi., 3.

St. John of the Cross says: "Thus the soul feels God's *love* and *gentleness* to be commensurate with His power, authority and greatness, for in Him these are all one" (Living Flame, 125). That God the All Powerful, the All Just, can still be infinitely gentle and tender and loving is to us a great mystery. Yet God's gentleness is impressed upon all His works. Smiling flowers, the soft whispering breezes, the chirping birds, the bees gathering honey from Nature's secret stores, these things mark the gentleness of God. And in the moral world Christ's tenderness towards children shows us how gentle He is. Still, all these things were not in God's eyes sufficient, and so He would do something more to bring home to us (incredulous souls!) His gentleness. The gentlest thing on God's earth is a mother's love for her child, and through this gentle influence Jesus wishes to win His way to our affections.

An Apostle. Mary is the most powerful of all advocates pleading with men and asking them to make Jesus the Lord and King and Ruler of their lives and hearts. An apostle is an advocate arguing God's cause. Read the story of St. Paul or St. Francis Xavier; what we know about them is that they exhausted themselves in trying to win souls to Jesus, in trying to persuade sinners to forsake sin and give their allegiance to the God that made them, to enlist in Christ's army and be loyal to Him as Commander.

Listen to Paul pleading eloquently in the heart of the great pagan cities; at Ephesus, at Troas, Philippi, Salonika, Athens, Corinth. All around him the foulness and horrors of idolatry, and the excesses and abominations of devil worship, rejection of God, with all its dreadful accompaniment of sin, sensuality and vice indescribable. Picture this intensely zealous Jew on fire about Jesus, and Jesus' principles and ideas, holding his pagan auditors spellbound with his fiery eloquence! What is the argument that makes his speech vibrate with passionate earnestness? God's claim on the soul, God's love for the soul, the shame of rejecting such a claim. His theme is one that necessarily stirs to its depths every soul that does not shut its eyes to the light; the theme of God, the rejected lover; of Christ our God coming to His own and His own receiving Him not. St. Paul, therefore, is an advocate trying to persuade souls to recognise God's claims upon them. He is occupied in the work of moving souls to love the Infinite Beauty, by clearing away the clouds of misconception and passion and prejudice that hide that Beauty from their inward gaze.

Misunderstanding. You know how often we form wrong ideas of people's characters through ignorance and misunderstanding. Sometimes we have quite distorted ideas of certain people, for whom, when we get to know then, we have nothing but admiration and affection and tenderness. It is said that all estrangement, coldness, harshness, is the result of want of insight. To know people better is, generally, to sympathise more with them and love them better.

Now this was St. Paul's work as an apostle, to clear away the thick clouds of ignorance and misunderstanding about God that hung over the pagan world; and that is the work of every apostle, to cause the sunshine of God's love, of the truth about God, to break in on the poor shivering soul and warm it to activity and make it leap to new life, as the sunshine in springtime makes the flowers leap up after the frost and harshness of winter.

God's Greatest Advocate. Now Mary is the greatest of all God's advocates. She has pleaded more successfully than anyone else with human souls to win them to God. We know the story all down the ages of the unceasing proofs of her powerful influence. Certain great centres of her devotion are familiar to us on account of the wonderful effects produced in those places by Mary's intercession. Just as Marathon, Lepanto, Waterloo are famous because of great victories won at those places, so Loreto, Lourdes, Guadalupe are famous for spiritual victories won through Mary's prayers at those shrines. Mary has a consuming desire to win souls from sin to saintliness, from creatures to the Creator, from the things of time to those of eternity. She wants to people heaven and shut the gates of hell. She is ever striving to turn men away from the broad and slippery road that leads to eternal destruction, and induce them to climb the narrow path that leads to the eternal hills, where sunshine and fresh winds and laughing flowers and gay brooklets and bursting song reign for ever. Now and then she wins a splendid victory in some princely soul, snatched from the

clutches of passion and given to God, when the soul so intensely responds to the call that it becomes the soul of a saint.

A Conversion. In the year 1521, in a castle in the north of Spain, lay a Spanish officer recovering from a wound received in battle some time before. Within him a fierce conflict was raging, grace and the devil struggling for the mastery of his soul. And, finally, grace won the day, the Spirit of God was triumphant, and behold, as he lay there pondering on his experience, the Blessed Virgin Mary stood before him for a few ecstatic moments, and Ignatius gazed upon the serene and starlike countenance of God's Immaculate Mother. Mary was there, for the victory was hers, and this visit gave Ignatius an assurance that she was with him. Thus his life for God, his life as an apostle, began under Mary's guiding influence.

Ignatius did much to save souls. He helped to roll back the tide of heresy in Germany, to revive faith and devotion in Italy, France and Spain; he sent Francis Xavier to India and Japan; he founded a new order of priests to preach the Gospel all over the world; of his personal companions, several are now canonised saints. Such was his work, accomplished in thirty-five years (he died in 1556, aged 65), and all that work was due to Mary's prayers for him.

Alexander of Hales entered the Franciscan Order because he was asked to do so in Mary's name, and he had promised never to refuse any request made to him in her name.

Blessed Albert the Great. Albertus Magnus received all his great wisdom from Our Lady. In 1277,

at Cologne (when aged 74), in the midst of a public lecture, his memory failed and he was unable to proceed. He told his astonished listeners that fifty years before, when in despair about his studies, Our Lady appeared to him and promised her help, and the result was his extraordinary learning and wisdom. Moreover, Mary gave him scholars of note, the chief of them being Thomas Aquinas.

The Catholic Spirit. The conviction that is brought home to us by studying lives of saints, of souls intensely devoted to God, is that our failure to do what they did, our failure in becoming saints, is chiefly due to our coldness in devotion to Mary the Mother of God. Neglect or rejection of this devotion is the essential mark of heresy. Blind rage against this devotion has characterised many of the greatest opponents of the Church. And, on the other hand, intense, overwhelming, passionate devotion to Mary has marked the lives of God's greatest workers, the lives of men like Bernard of Clairvaux, Bernardine of Siena, Alphonsus Liguori, and thousands of others. Men and women of the world shame us by their burning enthusiasm about some object that engages their attention, success at business, propagation of an idea, a language, a sect. Let us cry out incessantly to Mary to help us to know her better, and through her to know the Infinite God Who made her so beautiful.

11 MOTHER MOST ADMIRABLE

Behold thy Mother. — John xix., 27

The picture of "Mater Admirabilis," a fresco in the Sacred Heart Convent of the Trinita dei Monti, Rome, represents Our Lady, whilst still a child, in the Temple of Jerusalem, resting awhile from her daily toil of spinning. The figure is painted with a wonderful air of modesty and recollection, which are external signs of the soul's internal communion with God. The modesty of eyes and demeanour show that the soul is enjoying the Presence of its Creator. Impulsiveness of manner, the absence of self-restraint, are signs of an uncontrolled heart; of a soul set on other things besides God, and clinging to trifles. Whereas, if the interior sight is radiant from gazing on God, then the bodily eyes, too, are filled with modesty and holy recollection.

Mary's Childhood. Here we see Mary as a child, God's chosen lily, His spotless flower, radiant with the matchless holiness of the purest of beings; the eyes of her soul have gazed intently, lovingly, longingly, on the beauty of the Divinity as no created eyes ever gazed before; her heart is flaming white with a purity unmatched in any human creature. Think, then, how gloriously beautiful, how full of exquisite modesty and recollection her face and form will be! In particular, the picture suggests, by the lily painted beside Our Lady, that we must aim at purity of life. Like the lily, our soul should stand out from its surroundings by its beauty, by its intense whiteness and delicate shape. A soul stained with sin is like a flower decayed and full of evil odours.

The streaming sunshine it is that lifts the flowers into beauty, pouring its golden wealth upon them without stint, and filling them with the vigour of their lovely life. So the streams of God's golden graces have power to make souls live a vigorous life in the midst of corruption, and by virtue of this life to be beautiful, and to fill all about them with the perfume of their virtues. This, I say, is the result of life — intense life. Sin means the gradual numbing of the soul's interior activity, the deadening of its faculties, the extinction of its life. Hence a Saint's soul means a soul living an intensely active life, a soul in which the sap of grace is extraordinarily vigorous in its effects; and all that helps that life helps to purity, because purity is to the soul what the soft bloom is to the flower, what style is to literature, what perfection of form is to the statue or picture, what rich, mellow tone is in the singer; but with this difference, that this purity is God's chosen subject of delight and contemplation.

Purity of Soul. Purity of soul is for God all that beauty of human voice or of the masterpieces of art is to us; what the radiant, intense beauty of the Apollo Belvedere, or the Laocoon, is to the art student, or the rich notes of a great singer to the lover of music. This life, the intense life that results in this indescribable loveliness which we call Purity, is typified by the Lily of our Incomparable Mother. Will it be true to paint us after death with a white lily beside us? Does God see the white lily of purity, at present blazing with beauty in our soul?

Prayer and Work. Now, in order to nourish this

fair flower of Paradise, which has been by God's grace transplanted into the wilderness of this world, two things are specially necessary — prayer and work. And no one can ever hope to lead a pure and sinless life, to make this lily flourish, unless they pray earnestly and work diligently. The opposite of these two activities are tepidity, which hates prayer, and idleness, which shirks work. And these two things are the nursing mothers of sin, the enemies to purity of soul. When a well-educated child falls into careless ways and allows the bloom of the lily of purity to be tarnished, it comes either from neglect of prayer or from idleness. Hence we have set before us in Mary's Picture, on the one hand the Bible, which helped her to pray; on the other, the distaff, or instrument of her industrious work.

Spiritual Hands. Prayer feeds on the Bible — i.e., on God's Word. Prayer means work of the soul, just as spinning means the work of the body. The intellect and will are the two hands of the soul, and it is our duty to keep them properly occupied. These hands have to weave spiritual garments, and the material is supplied by the Bible; it is by constantly taking portions of this great mass of thought and weaving it into the texture of our lives that we pray. Prayer means interior activity about God, trying to think God's thoughts. That is why the Bible is here the emblem of prayer; that is why the praying people — i.e., the Saints — constantly used the Bible. And just as the hands weave garments to ward off cold, to defend the body against the inclemency of the weather, to nourish the life and warmth

of the body and preserve its health, so the spiritual hands have to constantly weave garments of strong texture for the soul, to defend it against the attacks of temptation, to keep it warm and fervent amidst the blinding, piercing storms of the sinful world, to nourish its life of purity.

If the housewife neglects her spinning and weaving, then in the winter time the cold winds find her children unprotected by double garments. So, if the soul is idle in prayer, then, when the storm of temptation comes and the winter of desolate worldliness is over the land, the soul will freeze, because it is not duly protected by spiritual garments. Therefore, Mary is our model — Mary, the child working diligently with her soul in prayer.

Idleness. And the body must work, too. The imagination and senses have to be kept occupied. Here, Mary is the model of children in their school days. School is a place for work. Not all work, of course; there is play also. But school is meant to train children to habits of work for their lifetime. We know that the ruin of a person's character nearly always comes from idleness or unwillingness to work. So the bankrupt, the thief, the libertine, the drunkard, every ruined career, is the result of idleness. And on the other hand, success in life is the reward of diligence. Character is chiefly developed by work. Habits of self-reliance, energy, courage, courtesy, charity — all these demand a spirit of work, and are absent from the lazy and the idle. Indolence is a very dangerous fault in a person's character, if habitually and deliberately indulged in; no remedy is too severe for such an evil.

Now, this being so, our Admirable Mother is represented with her work materials beside her. She was to be Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, yet she will work at her spinning and stitching like the humblest work-girl in the households of her native land. God will lift her up to incomparable heights of glory and sanctity, but Mary still works quietly at her spinning. As we gaze at this lovely picture of our Child Queen, we keep repeating: stainless purity, burning prayer, incessant diligence — these constitute the history of Mary's life.

Mary's Motherhood. A question arises: Why is this picture of the Child Queen called *Mater* Admirabilis? Perhaps the reason is this: This child, in her radiant beauty, is young in years, but she is the Mother of the Church, the Mother of the faithful, the Mother of Divine Grace. She is a child, and yet a Queen; a child, and yet the Mother of her people; a child in years, and yet a Mother in the maturity of her graces; a child in beauty and innocence, and yet a fruitful Mother on account of the souls she is already helping to eternal life. Motherhood means bringing a new human being into existence; it means the privilege of bestowing the greatest of all gifts, the gift of life. But there is motherhood in the world of grace too, when a soul helps to communicate the life of grace; and in this sense Mary is the Mother of souls, even at fifteen. And so she is already Mater Admirabilis, mother in a sense that no human tongue can tell or explain; mother practising the highest and most boundless form of charity, the bestowal of spiritual wealth; mother nurturing with gentlest

care the souls she is rearing up for God; mother admirable by her gentleness; admirable for her charity, for her purity, for her generosity; mother admirable in the number of her children (which include all the Saints). So no wonder we kneel reverently in Mary's presence and gaze fondly on this fair picture of our Child Queen, our Child Mother, our fairest little Monarch, whom God has given as a child to us, that we might, by her example, be led to Himself. A sinless child, fair as the morning, radiant and fragrant with God's grace, so she stands before us in order to win us for God. She is God's greatest advocate, His most eloquent preacher. She has more persuasively pleaded God's cause in the world than any other of His Saints. This child is God's most powerful ally; He owes her more than He owes any of His Saints. The Church's beauty, the richness of her sanctity, the zeal and charity that adorn her history are chiefly the result of this child's prayer and exertion. Shall we not love her, then, and honour her with all our might?

12 MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL

"*And establish within thyself a heart of Good Counsel.*" — Ecclesiasticus xxxvii., 17.

"Mother of Good Counsel" means Mother able and willing to give us good advice in our difficulties; just as Mater Misericordiæ means, Mother who shows mercy to us in our troubles. The

supreme subject on which we need counsel is our eternal salvation. That is, we need to know how to choose aright the means that will secure for us the possession of God. And we turn to Mary in this, as in every other need, for help. What a difference this gift of Light makes! Those who have not this light are inclined to blaspheme, to curse God. They look at this universe from the wrong side; they do not praise God, but are His enemies, belittling Him, lowering His reputation, alienating men's affections and devotion from Him. With the light of Faith, all is different, and when the light is intense the soul continues habitually intent on praise.

"*Fiat Lux.*" Now this light Mary will get for us. She asks God to utter a new Fiat Lux, and then the chaos of our soul is lit up. God separates the light from the darkness, the light of Life from the darkness of sin. And this production of grace is really a new creation; it is a divine work which only God can effect. Mary is God's dearest friend, and so we turn to her to ask her to obtain for us from her God this illuminating of our soul. So she is to us a Mother of Good Counsel; *giving us counsel about God* and obtaining for us the light to see things as God wishes us to see them.

Our thoughts about God are the great differentiating factor in life; they constitute the line of cleavage in mankind. Just as a deep study of astronomy helps us to think the right thoughts about the stars, so deep draughts of prayer help us to think right thoughts about God. And this supreme grace of prayer is one of God's special favours which this

Virgin Mother gets for her children. When we read the lives of the Saints, we see how they thought about God; their intense and elevated thoughts about God show us the light shining within.

Light about God's Work. But we do not see God directly here below; we are living amidst His *creatures*, and we need much light to read the puzzle of life aright. Or, if you like, we need light to see God in Creation, just as we need light to know God Himself directly. There is a difference between knowing Shakespeare or Francis Thompson personally and knowing them in their writings. We know Francis Thompson in a certain way from reading the "Hound of Heaven," but his friends knew him quite otherwise. Enemies of God see nothing but flaws in God's work; God's friends see the beauty and the harmony, and praise Him in His works. Now, this sympathetic attitude of mind towards creatures is a special "light," whereby we take the right point of view. And here, again, Mary is our counsellor, our instructor, our educator.

No one has so read God's secret in Creation as Mary has; no one has ever so penetrated into the inner meaning of this mystic Poem as she did. And so, no one is better able to instruct us about its meaning. Here, again, with how different eyes Saints looked on the universe from other people! What a different lesson the tossing ocean, the swaying forests, the glowing buttercups, the roses and the violets, the ceaselessly growing corn had for them! What music these things made in their lives, as telling them of God, the maker of them! The world

is full of intense meaning, just as Shakespeare's magic lines are weighted with beauty and force for those who have insight; or just as the loveliness of Nature, the freshly blowing breeze on a mountain top, the golden banners of the daffodils, the glory of summer roses, the mellow splendour of ripening corn have a deep, unutterable meaning for the poet.

The Universe Within. The world, then, is a book that Mary helps us to read. But besides the visible universe, there is another great sphere of thought wherein we need light still more urgently; that is the domain of human action, the region of the vast activities of the human will. Hitherto we have been contemplating Creation as separate from ourselves; now we contemplate our own soul with its myriad life. We are lords of this interior world, but to know how to rule it well needs much light. We need a trusty instructor and adviser in regulating the activities of this interior realm. We need light to grasp God's presence and God's law in our lives. This means knowledge of the *absolute authority* of God's law, which must be submitted to at any cost, and knowledge of the meaning of *sin*, or deflection from God's law. Hence, too, a deep sense of God's sanctity and His horror of sin; and, finally, clear insight into the dictates of conscience — that is, a delicate power of discrimination between right and wrong. Just as a proficient in any art acquires a power of perception which amateurs have not, so that an expert can detect at once a real "old master," a valuable jewel, a genuine banknote; so the proficient in prayer acquires an instinct for right and wrong, can tell at

once where sin is lurking, becomes a trusty judge of moral *actions*. And this power of discrimination is a special light shining in the soul of the just, extinguished or very feeble in the soul of the worldling. It is a mark of God's residence in the soul, as the brilliantly lit windows of the Royal Palace tell that the Monarch is at home, whereas darkness and gloom mark his absence.

Need of Light. And evidently this light or knowledge is of supreme importance for us. The whole object of education in various arts and sciences is to teach men how to distinguish, or discriminate, accurately. The final fruit of highly-trained culture is to be able to tell the true from the false, the good from the worthless, in rocks or in philosophy, in politics or in numismatics. The doctor's supreme triumph is to diagnose disease, and this depends on the power of observing with accuracy very minute facts. So in the moral world, right conduct depends on the *sense of right*, which may be highly trained, as in Saints, or almost extinct, as in the lax and tepid. And for this light we turn to the Mother of Good Counsel. This power of appreciating the value of a moral act is true wisdom. Just as a healthy and cultivated taste can tell the good wine from the bad, so the spiritual taste can tell the good wine of truth and obedience to law from the bad wine of sin and revolt. A lax conscience is like a perverted or dulled taste that takes vinegar for wine.

This spiritual taste is a sign of a spiritually healthy constitution. And Mary secures it for her clients. Connected with this special gift in the intellect is

the corresponding gift of fear in the will. Seeing what a vile thing sin is, the will dreads committing it, lest it offend God; and this is holy Fear. Hence, we have three special fields of activity for the intellect: God's own Nature and Attributes, Creatures in their relation to God, Human action; in other words, God, the physical universe, the moral world. And our happiness depends on our seeing aright in respect of all three. Mary, as Mother of Good Counsel, obtains for her faithful clients the precious interior light that guides the soul to think true thoughts about God Himself and about God's Creation.

13 MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR

All things were made by Him. — John i., 3.

All knowledge of God in this life comes to us through Creation. Suppose a man had lived in a coal mine all his life long, so that he had never actually gazed upon the full radiance of a summer's day: and now he sees a beautiful rose. From that rose he might guess a little of the beauty and perfection of sunshine, since it produced such loveliness: still his concept of the sun would be very inadequate, though true as far as it goes. So with us and God. We have never seen God, but we see the rose of Creation, and from its beauty and perfection we guess a little about Him Who made it. "With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be *gods* (i.e., fire, air, stars, the sun and moon), let them know how

much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they: for the first Author of beauty made all those things; or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them that He that made them is mightier than they. For from the greatness and beauty of creatures the first Creator of them is, by reasoning, set before our interior gaze" (Wisdom xiii.).

Beauty and Strength. Two aspects of creatures help to lift us to God: their beauty and their strength. That beauty and that strength are so wonderful that they help to explain idolatry, just as the attractiveness of human beauty explains the extravagant worship of lovers. Beauty and strength are the two qualities that excite our wonder and admiration in creatures. Each is an indication of perfection of being. Napoleon fills the world with his name because of his strength. So Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar; or, again, a great orator, swaying thousands by his speech. Strength is the capability of doing things, of overcoming or directing force, of ruling and guiding physical or spiritual energies. Strength is shown in action; it is a mark of intensity of life. Beauty is found either in action or in repose, as, e.g., in the lithe movements of a panther or the stillness of a Greek statue; in the rosy face of a sleeping child or the awe-inspiring activity of a thunderstorm. Strength is man's prerogative, beauty woman's; and the union of beauty and strength constitutes the perfection of conjugal and family life. Where the husband is strong, wise, authoritative, where the wife is tender, loving, gentle — there you have a perfect family life. So it was in Nazareth: Joseph

is strong in his trust in God: on Joseph God Himself relies in His hour of need; Joseph's dauntless courage saved Jesus from Herod's sword. And Mary is the type of the perfect wife and mother, radiant with a beauty that has fascinated the world and won her the enthusiastic devotion of millions of God's Saints.

The Poet's Vision. Strength and beauty are the characteristics of the universe, and the Book of Wisdom tells us that through this strength and beauty we get a glimpse of Him Who made the universe; since we reason from effect to cause, and so guess the strength and beauty of God from the creatures we gaze upon and are fascinated by. The contemplation of the world is a kind of Beatific Vision, though of a fleeting kind. Witness the raptures of poets, painters, sculptors, musicians. These men are gazing in rapt wonder on the face of Nature and expressing that wonder in words or in colour, in marble, or in glorious harmony.

Now, if this vision of *created* beauty is so enthralling, what will the vision of uncreated beauty be? How will that vision fill and occupy the soul to the exclusion of all other interests?

The Message of Creation. The spirit with which we should be filled in contemplating creatures is, in the first place, that of gratitude to God for bestowing so many gifts upon us. They are all marks of His love towards us, "gifts" in the fullest sense. Secondly, we should be filled with a sense of God's presence, manifested to us by creatures. Just as the sound of a person's voice, the words they speak, tell of the presence of the soul; but when the body is silent,

when all motion (of breath or heart) ceases, then we know the soul is gone and death has come; so the world's activity shows God's presence; its appealing beauty is the whisper of His voice, its myriad changes the flash of the eye that tell He is there. Thirdly, we should be filled with a conviction that the beneficent influence of creatures on us is proof of God's beneficent and kindly attitude towards us. Creatures feed me, support my life, minister to my wants; the sun warms, the fields cheer me, the mountains and the ocean rest my mind, the stars delight me, friends and poetry soothe me, music charms and elevates me. Creatures tell me not only that He is present, but that He is friendly, that He is active to promote my interests. The rose gives me its fragrance because *He* has so constructed and arranged it; the mountain brooks comfort me in summer; the ocean lifts and soothes because He has willed it so. Now, kindness provokes kindness. If we find others willing to help us, we are anxious to help them. So the kindness of God, manifested in the flowers, the comforting sunshine, the music of the ocean, the peace of the mountain top, the gentle words of a friend, provokes me to be kind to Him, to work for Him, to let *my* activity promote His interests.

St. Paul's Argument. St. Paul says, in his speech at Derbe (Acts 14, 16); "He left not Himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." So that it is not only the beauty and strength but the beneficence of Nature that leads us

to knowledge of God. And we should constantly contemplate Nature thus, as telling about God, just as we study the letter of an absent friend in order to learn more about him.

14 MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER

My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. — Luke i., 47.

Mary is Mother of Our Redeemer, the Mother of Him Who has ransomed us from slavery. We can more fully realise the gift she has given us by meditating on the nature of the liberty her Son has secured for us.

Slavery is a bitter word. Centuries of appalling agony are summed up in that one hateful expression. Black pages of crime, of intolerable cruelty and persecution are buried deep down in that single epithet. Slavery is so terrible because we are created to be free. Freedom is a thought of God. All the inspiration that the word has held for noble spirits down the ages, the exultation, the force and fire it has given, come from the fact that God made us to be free. Just as naturally as a child loves sunshine and flowers, just as naturally as our minds are soothed by the ocean and the midnight sky and the rolling expanse of human history and the deep heart of the rose and the story of human love and hope and adventure: just so does our soul turn to liberty and find its joy in being free.

When God's light comes and strikes athwart

a sinful soul, like a vivid flash on a stormy midnight ocean, it reveals to that soul its state of abject *slavery*, of slavery to sin and passion, which cramp and fetter it as effectually as the bars that cage the tyrant's victim.

The Price of Freedom. God made us to be free. Freedom does not imply the absence of all restraint or checks or guiding principles, any more than material freedom implies the liberty of leaping over precipices. All true freedom involves restraint. The sailor dancing across the ocean is free, though his power of movement is confined to his narrow ship; the very circumstances of life at sea impose restraints which the landsman is without. The aspirant to artistic perfection must make many sacrifices in order to achieve success. If you would taste the joys of mountain climbing, you must give up the luxuries of ordinary home life. So it is with the freedom that is God. To win that freedom, the soul must be ready to pay the price.

The Great Adventure. Life is a great war of emancipation. In this war the soul makes its great bid for the freedom that is God, sets out upon the great adventure of trying to win Him Who is Infinite, to be its possession for ever.

It matters not who the combatant is: whether a child-martyr of twelve, like Agnes of Rome, or a novice of sixteen, like Stanislaus, or an aged Bishop of ninety, like Liguori — once it is a question of winning God, we stop to listen to their story; we are interested and would know the smallest details of their lives, for we know that their fight is to be *our* fight also.

As they were made to possess God, so were we; we too may, if we please, secure Him for ourselves. Hence, in opposition to those that sneer at rules and restraint, penance and obedience, chastity and poverty, we have to insist on the fact that these are the necessary equipment for the fight, the restraint necessary to secure a wider liberty, the athlete's training to win the olive crown of victory. St. Paul says we are all competitors in the arena, and to secure success we must undergo many hardships. How intensely the struggle for first place occupies the attention of the runner in the stadium! How resolutely the will is set upon it, how remorseless in despising distracting objects! Do we struggle thus for *God*, for the supreme victory of winning Him?

The Bonds of Love. We may, furthermore, remark that even God Himself submits to restraint in order to win His victory in souls. He shuts Himself in a prison house of flesh and blood, lives within the barriers of time and space in order to achieve the liberty He aimed at. He wished to have free access to our hearts, to secure the Freedom of the City of man's soul. Sin shuts God out from the soul, and, in order to break through the barrier, God puts on the fleshly armour of our human nature, and goes down into the lists to fight and be wounded in order to win us as His trophies, that we may be His captives, bound in the golden chains of love for ever.

Part Two

VIRGIN TITLES

Part Two

VIRGIN TITLES

15 VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT

Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven. — St. Matt. xviii., 4.

Mary's Childhood. Christianity has ideals for every state of life, and it has many examples of its ideal of perfect children. Christianity lifts the ordinary things of life into a new and higher sphere, it glorifies human existence, it sets the dull, common daily routine in a splendour reflected back from the gates of Heaven, and thus makes life new. The world was old and effete, worn out by its own excesses, when Jesus Christ came to give it back its youth by explaining the true meaning of life. And so a new era opened for children also, especially when Jesus made His memorable pronouncement about their position in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus was asked to point out the road to greatness in God's service: "Master, who, thinkest Thou, is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" His answer was to take up a child in His arms and say: "Whosoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." That was an epoch-making declaration. It gave children a

new status in the universe, since they are thus pointed out by the highest authority as the model for all to imitate.

A Childlike Spirit. To have a childlike spirit is the secret of success in God's service. And in order to supply us with models, the Holy Spirit raises up child saints from time to time; young souls that from the very beginning of life are intent upon God. They are strange phenomena, these children, passing swiftly across the busy stage of life, their eyes lit up with a wondrous joy, their hearts occupied with the thought of the supreme Lover. They hardly seem to belong to the world. Such is the glimpse we get of Blessed Imelda, the Italian girl of eleven, dying in an ecstacy of love at her first Holy Communion; of Stanislaus, the boy hero, fighting the world so stoutly that he may not be faithless to God's call; of Aloysius turning whole-heartedly to God at the age of seven and spending the rest of his life in extraordinary fervour; of Thérèse of Lisieux telling us that from the age of three she never refused God anything; of little Nellie of Holy God astonishing the world by the fervour and length of her thanksgivings when four years of age. These young people set their faces resolutely Godwards, and we catch the reflection of God's brightness in their glance. And being so heroically set upon God, they draw others after them; for we read that the effect of their fervour was to kindle the same flame in other souls, thus spreading the sacred fire which Jesus came to cast upon the earth.

The Weak Things of the World. Christ's plan from

the beginning was to take feeble instruments and make them His most powerful weapons for good. He took the fishermen from Lake Galilee, the sinful woman from the streets of Magdala, and so He takes children to be His helpers in saving mankind. Pride was the chief foe Christ had to encounter. He declared war on the proud, self-sufficient world, and to combat its pride He took up a baby child, embraced him tenderly, and held him up as the model for all to imitate! Simplicity and affection are the two important factors in this scene, and it is just by these two qualities the world is to be saved — by childlike humility and by love. We must be humble and we must be tender if we want to win souls.

What a scene this is! Jesus the great world conqueror girding Himself for the task of saving mankind, and behold His ally in the combat is a child! See them standing there, the strong Man and the little child! Those two are about to save the world! Now, if the Church sets up children like Imelda, Aloysius, Stanislaus to be our models, much more does she wish us to turn our gaze upon the greatest of all her children, the holy child, Mary of Nazareth, who was destined to be the Mother of Christ.

The Presentation in the Temple. The feast of Our Lady's Presentation shows us Mary being prepared for her life's work. In the Temple this holy child went through her noviceship training. She is not only at school in the ordinary sense, learning lessons like other children, but she is also at school with God. The supreme Master of souls is instructing her day by day in the supremest of all sciences,

the science of prayer. And what marvellous progress she is making, this aptest of God's pupils! We may imagine what those years of preparation were by thinking of the task that lay before her. We know with what care royal children are trained, how every effort is made to fit them for their future high and responsible work. Also, we know the long and careful apprenticeship that is required to prepare for important professions and official duties. This child is being prepared to be God's Mother. A little babe shall be born to her and entrusted entirely to her care, who is not merely a royal babe, a son of the greatest of earthly monarchs, destined to hold a proud position in the world, but a babe who is the Son of the King of the Universe, who is actually the very living God in Person. What a woman His Mother must be! How carefully she must be prepared! What wisdom and prudence must be hers that she may be fitted to be God's Mother and also the Mother of mankind!

On the feast of Mary's Presentation in the Temple the Church bids us think of that time of preparation in Mary's life, in order that we may learn the lesson that, if we wish to be distinguished in His service, we, too, must have due time of preparation — a time of quiet and recollection and prayer during which the Holy Spirit may work in our souls and prepare them to receive the heavenly graces and communications without which success in supernatural work is impossible.

16 VIRGIN MOST VENERABLE

Espoused to a man whose name was Joseph. — Luke i., 27.

The Espousals. The greatest day in St. Joseph's life was the day of his espousals to Mary of Nazareth. It was to him what the Annunciation was to Mary herself, the coming of the Incarnation into his life. Our pictures generally represent St. Joseph holding the Child Jesus in his arms, the little Babe looking perfectly happy and comfortable as It nestles close to him. One sees there a rough, simple carpenter; with kindly face, a man of honesty, sincerity, fair-dealing, but withal a village craftsman with hands hardened by toil. But in his arms we see the Divine Child clinging affectionately to him, confiding Himself entirely to those strong arms to shield Him from the dangers of life. And just because we see this we know that Joseph can help us. For seeing the Child entrusted to the fatherly care of this village carpenter, and listening to heavenly messages conveyed by angel voices to this poor workman, bidding him take the Child and His Mother and fly with them from persecution, we feel quite sure that Joseph is one of God's chosen ones. Then, too, we read that the Child of twelve, whose wisdom held the doctors of the law spellbound in the Temple gallery, went from God's House to the mountain village of Nazareth, and there for long years lived in submission to this carpenter; and the story of those long years of quiet, simple obedience confirms the impression we have formed of St. Joseph's greatness.

"*Subditus Illis.*" We see, then, the Child obeying

the carpenter, spending His life in the carpenter's company, living under his roof, partaking of his hospitality; we know, therefore, that this carpenter is favoured above all the sons of men, since with him the Divine Stranger chooses to lodge during His brief visit to this world of ours. Joseph's home was the first Tabernacle on earth, wherein the Infinite Holiness of the Son of God was housed during life; and Joseph was the Guardian of that Tabernacle. He is the highest officer at the Royal Court of the Boy King, he enjoys the King's fullest confidence, and, therefore, we know we can count on his influence being powerful.

But will Joseph of Nazareth be interested in us, or willing to help us? We know that Joseph, the Vizier at the Egyptian Court, was overcome with emotion when his brethren, who had sold him into slavery, came to Egypt begging for help. And because they were his father's sons, his own blood-relations, he forgave their sin and wept with love for them. But why expect that Joseph of Nazareth will take an interest in us? Well, the answer is easy. The bond of union that made Joseph in Egypt so merciful to his brethren was the blood that ran in their veins; the bond of union that binds Joseph of Nazareth to us is the Blood of Jesus, which has been shed for us to make us all His adopted brothers. Since we are Christ's brethren, we, too, are Joseph's foster-children. St. Joseph is interested in Jesus and His work; therefore, he must be interested in us.

The Law of Love. This is Christ's inexorable law: "Love Me love My brethren, whom I have purchased

by My Blood." He exempts no one from this law of charity; those that refuse to abide by this law He casts forth from His Kingdom for ever! No need, then, to fear that Joseph will be indifferent to us. Nay, just in proportion to the perfection of Joseph's insight into Jesus' principles and his union of heart and will with Jesus will be the perfection of his love for Jesus' brethren. Hence, with just as strong a trust as that with which Joseph's brethren went to Joseph in Egypt may we turn to this greater Joseph at Jesus' court and ask his help. St. Joseph's one desire has ever been to win souls to God. And saints innumerable testify to the effectiveness of his Apostolate.

His Wedding Day. The Espousals of Joseph and Mary were the most notable espousals that ever took place in this bustling world. That, surely, was a marriage ratified in Heaven as no other marriage ever was ratified.

"Joseph the carpenter has taken a wife!" So ran the news; and people asked the bride's name, and were told that the lovely child who had lived so long in retirement in the Temple precincts was the person of his choice. And they offered him congratulations. So it was that earth regarded the event. Men said that Joseph was a happy man in getting such a wife. That and no more. Laughter and song, music and dancing, feasting and health-drinking would celebrate the event, as at Cana later on. But in the eyes of Heaven how differently it was understood! Joseph the carpenter was indeed to wed. But the bride, who was she? We may well beg the angels to

answer that question! They alone knew the secret. It has since become our privilege to know a little of who she was, but when the villagers of Nazareth were making merry on Joseph's wedding day, the secret was still locked up in Heaven, the secret that this Bride was the immaculate and sinless one, the Fairest of all God's children, the one spotless soul that had escaped the taint of Adam's guilt: who was come into the world with the greatest and highest destiny possible for a creature. Her stainless being was to be the great meeting place between Heaven and Earth, between God and Creation: in her chaste womb the mysterious union of a Divine Person with a human nature was to be accomplished; she was to supply God with the substance of His Own Body and Blood. She was to be the Mother of Jesus the Divine. That was the angels' secret as they thronged around her on the wedding morning: and if they could be capable of envy, how they would have envied Joseph the carpenter!

His Graces. And we may ask: What graces did Joseph receive on that morning? We read of God's chosen spouses receiving wonderful favours on the morning of their religious profession, priests on the occasion of their first Mass. What graces did Joseph receive? We may guess at them a little by thinking of the charge committed to him, of the task laid upon him, of being the spouse, friend, daily companion of the most spotless, purest, holiest of all God's saints.

How special the graces given to him to keep his thoughts absolutely stainless, that he might be worthy to live in Mary's presence! How filled his

soul must have been with the fragrance of God's grace in order that he might be less unworthy to minister to her! How pure and lovely and affectionate his words, his acts, his conduct in every detail of life! A chosen soul assuredly beloved by God! And because God chose to place him so near to Jesus and Mary, therefore, also, God has made Joseph an active agent in winning souls for Jesus, since that is the one activity the friends of Jesus covet. Hence we must seek St. Joseph's aid constantly to help us to save souls to present to his foster Son, nestling in his arms.

17 VIRGIN MOST RENOWNED

Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. — Luke i., 28.

WHAT effects this prayer has produced in the world! What a source of light and strength it has been, this simple address to Mary, congratulating her on the divine Motherhood! The glorifying of the Name of Jesus has been especially effected through the illuminating of Mary's soul. She has recognised and understood more perfectly than all others the glory of the sacred Name; that it is a Name above all names, at which every knee must bend in adoration and every tongue cry out in praise. And this outpouring of light into Mary's soul is because of the divine Motherhood. She is prepared both in body and soul

for her great elevation by the action of the Holy Spirit.

All down the ages souls illumined by faith see Mary's greatness, and congratulate her unceasingly on it; they rejoice for the graces bestowed upon her, and in particular for the incomprehensible dignity of the divine Motherhood. And this ever-renewed act of congratulation, when repeated constantly whilst contemplating the scenes of Our Lord's life, we call the Rosary. In the meditations of the Rosary we study succeeding phases of Jesus' career from birth to death and resurrection; and in every new phase and new scene we find new reasons for repeating the words: "Hail full of grace!"

God's Loveliest Flower. As we see the Babe appearing in the world we congratulate Mary on giving birth to such a son, for this Babe, born in poverty, is the Person of the Everlasting Son of God. As the Child waxes strong and attracts us by His charm, as we get to love this dear Child that has come down from Heaven to visit us, this flower of Paradise wafted into the dark prison-house of sin, this soft, white lily growing in radiant loveliness on the barren soil of this rough world, we turn and congratulate Mary, because He is her Child, because she is the Mother of this fair and beautiful boy whose presence makes the world as Heaven itself to the eyes of faith.

Then we see His influence begin to exert itself, we mark His words, we note the tendency of His teaching; we realise more and more fully that this boy, this man, is like no other boy or man that ever lived;

that He is a Teacher with knowledge to impart such as no teacher ever imparted before, with a message that thrills the human soul as no other words can thrill it, falling on the listening soul like harmonies from another sphere that wake its yearning as the breath of spring wakes the earth to new life. And as we drink in His doctrine and gaze upon His sacred Countenance, as we follow His footsteps and cling to His robe, or nestle near Him and feel the pressure of His Hand upon our heads, we turn towards Mary and again repeat with new intensity: "Hail full of grace, blessed art thou among women; blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

The Passion. Then we follow Jesus into the valley of humiliation, we see Him bruised and broken and maltreated, remembering that it is thus He must save the world; that, dreadful as are His sufferings, they are for Him the road to glory. We wonder at the heroism, the self-sacrifice, the grandeur of character, the intense love He displays. By laying down His life in order to win salvation for the human race He proved His devotion to mankind. And as we taste the meaning of this great love, we turn and cry out to Mary: "Blessed art thou in being the Mother of this Divine Lover!" Each scene in the Passion that brings out the depth and heroism of Christ's love increases our feeling of admiration and joy that Mary is His Mother.

Finally, we contemplate her Son in His risen life of power and majesty, and again congratulate Mary on being the Mother of Christ. In Heaven we shall cry out with intense meaning: "Hail full of grace,

the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

Mary's Glory. As a mother rejoices in the glory of her sons, so Mary will rejoice in receiving for ever the congratulations of God's servants when they see her standing so near to Him whose radiant beauty is the joy of Heaven. The Rosary is the beginning on earth of that song of rejoicing which we shall sing to Mary in Heaven. Only in Heaven, when the full light dawns which will show us the meaning of the Name of Jesus, only when that glory that Jesus has from the Father breaks irresistibly upon the soul and ravishes it in an ecstasy of delight, only then shall we understand the full meaning of the "Hail Mary," the full extent of Mary's renown. Only then shall we repeat those words with a true sense of their significance, with full insight into the meaning they had for Gabriel when, filled with awe, he first addressed them to the Virgin Mary in her home at Nazareth.

But whilst still on earth awaiting the dawn of that blessed day, we shall be helped to understand the "Hail Mary" most of all by intense faith in the Divinity of Jesus her Son. The more perfectly we know who He is, the better we realise what it is to be His Mother. In the Rosary the note of admiration grows in intensity as we move onwards with Jesus towards His final triumph; and when we see Mary herself crowned in Heaven as Mother of Christ, we can find no better words in which to frame our address of congratulation than those in which Gabriel addressed her when her exaltation began; which words are the expression of the great angelic nature

lost in astonishment before the masterpiece of God. Just as the artist in presence of a perfect work is filled with wonder and speaks few and simple words that tell of his admiration, so Gabriel speaks few words. But those words are filled with the fire of intensest admiration; and weighted with this meaning, they serve for all time, even for eternity perhaps, as a fitting means to convey our admiration of Mary's greatness, to celebrate Mary's renown.

18 VIRGIN MOST POWERFUL

Fecit mihi magna qui potens est. — Luke i., 49.

It is through prayer that Mary exerts her power with God. The Pater Noster was the form of prayer that Jesus taught to His disciples. It contains the petitions He wishes His friends to have ever in their hearts and on their lips. We may be sure then that in the Pater Noster we have the thoughts that occupied constantly the soul of our Immaculate Mother. Since she was so closely united with Jesus, His wishes were her wishes, His aspirations were her aspirations, His petitions were her petitions.

Jesus Christ came into the world to influence human thought, and in this prayer He tells us the thoughts that should occupy us, the petitions we should offer to God, the wishes and aspirations we should indulge in and encourage in our seasons of meditation. What a wonderful thing to reflect that *we* can feed our souls on the same nourishing thoughts as fed the soul of Jesus and of Mary!

"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN"

1. We place ourselves in God's Presence as His children, and remember His serene blessedness and felicity. So Jesus bids us begin our prayer by thinking of Heaven, of the peace and infinite serenity of the Blessed Trinity. "May Thy Name be blessed." His Name for the most part is cursed and blasphemed by mankind. We pray that it may be honoured. Now, this is a subject for deep reflection — viz., that we by our aspirations and desires can stop the havoc of irreligion: our desires in prayer are like a fortified wall drawn across the world to stop the devil's advance. So it was with Moses' prayer; and as Ignatius Loyola looked out on Europe swept by the devastating storms of Luther's revolt, and his soul was torn with longing to come to the rescue, the piercing cry, "Hallowed be Thy Name!" rang out in the castle of his soul, rang sharp and loud in God's listening ear, and God answered the cry; and whilst Ignatius strove in prayer, this Almighty Spirit was shaping other souls in Spain, in Italy, and far-off Germany to come and help him. Peter Favre was a boy at school, Xavier was a young student, Teresa of Avila was a child of six, dreaming of martyrdom; and whilst Ignatius was buried in profound contemplation of Christ's Kingdom, and with all the intensity of his soul was crying out that God's Name might be blessed, the answer was being prepared, the tide of heresy was being rolled back. It is in the white heat of desire that the weapons are forged, the steel is tempered, to hew in pieces God's foes. No

mild simmering heat will suffice; it must be an intense, white, blazing fire to shape the sword to such high work. Let us therefore indulge long and ardently in this wish, "May Thy Name be honoured." In actual fact this honouring of His Name will only come about by the activity of God's graces in the depths of human souls, turning them gently to the light and showing them His divine beauty. When they catch a glimpse of His beauty, then they cease to sin and begin to praise.

And our prayer is not merely that sinners may cease to dishonour His Name (since evil children are their father's shame), but that His friends may learn to praise Him more perfectly, that the gift of prayer may be bestowed liberally upon them, that they may get more intense light and elevation, and so honour Him more. Thus Jesus prayed for all men; for *me*, too; and so I must pray in union with Him. How intensely Jesus must have dwelt on this prayer, living as He did surrounded by idolatrous peoples!

"THY KINGDOM COME"

2. God's Kingdom is in the souls of men; His reign is in the world of spirit, and He reigns through His grace. A king reigns when his law is recognised and obeyed by his subjects. So God reigns when men are submissive to His law. When sin comes, God's flag ceases to float over the castle of the soul, and the devil's flag is flung out instead. God is thrust forth from His own domain, becomes an exile from the home He created for Himself. This petition is, that He may be restored to those castles, that His

sway may be extended to the places that know Him not. We acknowledge Him Lord by handing Him the keys of our soul and bidding Him come and occupy it. This we do by union in prayer and the union of the Holy Eucharist. Hence, "Thy Kingdom come" includes a desire to see the practice of Holy Communion more widespread, to see more people given up to prayer, to see more vocations, more young people becoming priests or nuns, a greater number of zealous souls going on foreign missions; for in every such case God's Kingdom is coming more intensely into human souls.

"THY WILL BE DONE"

3. That God's will should be accomplished is a tremendous thought; just as the opposite, that His will should be frustrated and set at nought, is a terrible thing to think about, when we remember that He is Infinite. The insolence of petty, ill-informed, blinded creatures setting God's will aside and refusing to obey it is appalling. When, in silent contemplation, we look out on history, the sight that meets our gaze is that of God's will being formally despised and contemned. Now we set to work to entertain in our souls this deep wish that God's will be done by His creatures. And the effect on ourselves of this prayer should be to make us *avoid sin:* and by praying this prayer for others we beg that immorality and vice be checked and that virtue may spread and increase (both public and private).

Faith and Hope. Hence, by the first petition, "Hallowed be Thy Name," we beg that idolatry and

worship of creatures be abolished, and that God's Name be praised through the increase of the Light of Faith. For this is the first step to conversion and holiness of life — viz., to believe in and reverence God. By the second petition, "Thy Kingdom come," we beg that God may reign in men's souls by Hope. By hope we long for God as our own supreme Good, and when our hearts are set upon securing Him as our treasure, then His Kingdom is established in us. It is hope and trust that finally turn men to God. Hope kills that fear of pain, humiliation, toil, or death, that is such a powerful factor in making men turn from God, making them mutiny against the Captain of their soul. And it is hope sends souls into religious life undaunted by the difficulties, it is hope that steels them to face hardships for His sake. So "Thy Kingdom come" is a prayer for the increase of hope in ourselves and others.

Charity. By the third petition, "Thy will be done," we pray for the virtue of charity, since "He that loveth Me keeps My Commandments" — i.e., does my will. And love is the lasting and noble motive to make us do another's will. No other power in the world can make us truly, genuinely, interiorly obedient. But Jesus puts the matter in its most practical shape. Men may speak deceptively of love; but about doing God's will there can be no deception; if you do His will you love Him. The only antidote to sin is love of God, and so we pray that charity may grow.

Mary's soul was ever filled with those ardent petitions, and the work that has actually been

accomplished by the Church of Jesus, the conversions that have been wrought, the souls that have been sanctified, are the answer to her all-powerful prayers.

19 VIRGIN MOST MERCIFUL

There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother. — John xix., 25.

The Seven Dolours. Mary is merciful because she is full of sympathy for us: and she is full of sympathy because she has suffered so intensely through and with her Son. The sorrows of Mary are a favourite subject of contemplation for her children; the realisation that Mary, Christ's spotless Mother, had to suffer, is a source of strength to them in their sufferings.

Three of the Dolours of Our Lady are incidents in the child-life of Our Lord; the other four belong to His Sacred Passion.

In the Temple. 1. The first note of warning came from holy Simeon: "A sword shall pierce thy soul." These words fell heavily on Mary's heart, that was full of joy and sunshine because of the Babe in her arms. Like a funeral knell this broke in on her joy, and she knew that the Child was to be her cross. For the old man said: "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." Here she is told plainly, though

in brief, what Jesus' life is to be. He is set for the fall of many and a sign to be contradicted; and on this account Mary's soul shall be torn with anguish, at seeing her Child battling with the raging storm and finally overwhelmed by it. Remark that St. Luke (ii., 34) says: *dixit ad Mariam matrem ejus:* directly to His Mother He spoke. What is the meaning of the revealing of thoughts from many hearts? Evidently it implies that the inner secrets of hearts will be revealed. Great revolutions bring into the light of day secret passions, ambitions, thoughts that in ordinary circumstances are hidden away. So the advent of Jesus is to shake the world to its foundations. He will be the dividing line in the history of the world. The question of men's attitude towards Him, — of worship or else of hatred — will bring out the secrets of men's souls. Just as the battlefield sifts soldiers, so Christianity sifts souls and divides the worldling from the spiritual-minded. In this sense, therefore, the thoughts of hearts will be dragged into the light of day; the doctrine of Jesus, like some powerful chemical, precipitates what was hitherto held in solution.

This we call Mary's first sorrow. In reality it includes all her life of sorrow, for it is the lifting of the veil that hung over the future; a lightning flash that revealed in the distance the Hill of Calvary crowned with a Cross; whilst a voice told her that the Babe in her arms had to travel that road. So in the life of St. Thomas à Becket we are told that at Pontigny he had a vision of his own martyrdom; saw the bloody crown on his head, years before the event.

This was a revealing to Mary's heroic soul of the sacrifices God would ask of her. God often invites people thus to take up a life of self-denial and reparation. But in Mary's case the bitterness consisted in this: She must consent to the sacrifice of her own beloved Son. It meant not merely parting with her Child, but handing Him over to obloquy, pain, torture, and death. That was what wrenched her soul. That was the sharp sword that stabbed her so pitifully and made her the Queen of Martyrs.

Egypt. 2. No sooner has the Prophecy been uttered than its fulfilment begins. Suddenly, at midnight, Mary is roused from sleep, and hears with terror that Herod's soldiers are seeking the Child to destroy Him. Already the world's opposition is showing itself, the world of sin is up in arms against this intruder as its natural foe. The first gleam of His banners has been seen and there is a fierce call to arms, a rush to annihilate Him. So with white, anxious face Mary makes her hasty preparations. Egypt! that is a long way off, a land of pagans and idolatry! She had often seen Egyptian merchants passing along the roads of Galilee with their long lines of camels. She had read much about Egypt in the Old Testament: the land of Moses and of Joseph. Hastily she lifts the Babe and presses Him to her bosom, they steal quietly into the dark street, and in a few minutes are outside the town, hastening along the silent road that runs southwards into the Judæan wilderness. So the journey begins. They have fled, but they know not when the noise of pursuit may make itself heard behind them. So, clasping her

Babe, in terror for His life, her heart filled with foreboding and yet trusting in God, Mary flies into Egypt.

The Paschal Feast. 3. The third Dolour is the loss of Jesus during the visit to Jerusalem, when He was a boy of twelve. On this occasion the memory of Simeon's prophecy of woe is renewed, with a sharp, unexpected blow: Mary's martyrdom is to be through Jesus, her adored Child. She loved with a strength of which we have no conception; the purity and fire of her affection is but faintly suggested by the instances of affection one may have known in parents, wives, or children. The pain of separation is in proportion to the love of the sufferer. And just as we feel how deep was Jacob's grief mourning for his lost Joseph, whom he believed to be devoured by wild beasts, so we can guess a little how deep was Mary's anguish at the loss of her Child.

This loss of Jesus seems a strange episode, so intensely human and natural that we find it hard to fit it into the supernatural position of Mary as God's Mother. Perhaps she thought the hour of Simeon's prophecy had come, that already, as a boy of twelve, He was to be torn from her and sacrificed? Perhaps the memory of Abram being asked to immolate Isaac came back to her with a new and dread significance? We are told by herself in St. Luke that she sought the child *sorrowing.* With anxious heart and blanched cheeks, a prey to vague terror, she retraces her steps. Years later Jesus Himself was to undergo an agony of fear in Gethsemane: Jeanne d'Arc went to death weeping for terror. So God demands even this

bitter sacrifice of our spotless Mother, that she should be filled with fear and anguish through the loss of her Child. How earnestly she prayed to God for success in her quest! The black cloud of misery rested on her soul for three days; just as after His death she mourned from Friday to Sunday. And then the light returned.

Desolation. Mary's desolation in the Seven Dolours helps us because they are a type of our own desolations on the path to Heaven; since all our torture of soul comes from God being shut out from view. And it cheers us to know that her dreary time of sorrow brought after it new light and elevation. For she finds Him seated in the Temple talking to the Doctors and asking them questions. She intervenes and claims Him as her Child. Fondly stroking His hair, she says softly, after the first warm kiss of motherly affection: "My Child, why have You treated us in this way?" What a tender, reproachful question, as she gazes into the beautiful eyes of the Child who is God as well as man! What a tone of authority! How strong she is with God! How earnest is her protest! It is like the Psalmist crying out: "*Quia tu es Deus fortitudo mea, quare me repulisti?*" or Jesus' own dreadful cry of protest: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"Son, why hast Thou treated us in this way?" How the tears leaped down her quivering, flushed cheeks as she spoke, tears of joy now that she holds Him in her arms once more! "For see, Thy father and I have been looking for Thee with sorrowful hearts." "Why cause us pain like this?" Surely a

reasonable question. But the answer of Jesus reminds His Mother of the prophecy of old; it is the Father in Heaven who has asked the sacrifice; it is the Eternal that asked Mary's great soul to accept martyrdom; and this is a part of the suffering. "Why did you look for Me thus? Did you not know well that I must be about my Father's business." A mysterious answer which they did not understand.

Via Crucis. 4. The last four Dolours refer to the events of a few hours that took place on Good Friday. They are: The meeting with Jesus in Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, taking down His dead body from the Cross, and laying the body in the tomb.

The meeting on the *Via Dolorosa* was, perhaps, the first occasion since His arrest that Mary could come in contact with Him, as hitherto He was in the hands of the soldiers. It is easy to conceive the scene. The pale, afflicted woman struggling with her feelings, crushed with pain, her soul dead to outward events, waiting on the street where she knows He will pass. The morning has been one of dreadful suspense. Amidst the music and gaiety of the Passover festival, Mary was torn with anxiety as to the result of the trial going forward in Pilate's hall. But finally the dread message reached her: He has been condemned and sentenced to death! — to death by crucifixion. With a mighty act of heroic charity Mary accepted the blow; she made the offering to God, and said: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*" Only one thing now re-

mains to do: she must be with Him at the last. She must lend Him the comfort of her presence. He must see that she was brave and true to Him to the end. So she is standing in the street with Mary Magdalen and a few others. The noisy crowd are hurrying past, trumpets are blaring, shouts resounding, camels screaming and snarling; but Mary is drowned in a sea of misery that cannot be removed by any distraction. And in a few minutes Jesus is before her. He has fallen once already, and the sight of Him is a dreadful agony to her. He is so white and worn, so weak and exhausted; His face wears such a strained look of anguish; His sacred countenance is so marred and disfigured, bruised and gashed by His torturers. And no one has pity on Him; He is simply a poor hunted wretch going to be gibbeted and got rid of. Mary joins the sorrowful procession and climbs Calvary step by step with her Son.

Calvary. 5. The scene on Mount Calvary is recalled vividly for us in the *Stabat Mater*. And our spirit should be the spirit of that great sequence — namely, earnest pleading for a share in her grief. This sorrow, this anguish of Mary and Jesus is the force that is to save the world: the tears we shed for them and with them are the saving, cleansing waters that wash sin out of our lives. Therefore must we cry out for this gift of sorrow.

Desolata. 6. When Jesus is dead, His poor bruised body is laid at His Mother's feet, and she takes the head on her lap. And in this attitude the Church loves to contemplate her; the woman who knows not sin, buried in speechless grief as she holds

the body of her Divine Son, whom sin has murdered. By gazing on that mournful spectacle the Church wishes her children to learn the meaning of violating God's Law. Mary is mourning over the dead body of her Son. So the widow of Naim wept for her dead son when Jesus stopped to comfort her; so all through history poor mothers have to weep for their children. To Mary they can turn in their bitter hour for comfort. She has tasted that sorrow to the full, and will know how to sympathise.

The Tomb. 7. Finally the body is buried; the tragedy is over, and Mary turns in utter misery back to the city. It seems such a short time since the Angel was whispering his wonderful message into her ears on a bright spring morning in sunny Galilee. The world seemed so gay, the birds were singing, as the great secret was whispered from Heaven: "Hail! Full of Grace; Blessed amongst women." Then the Babe was born; and as He grew up the sweet Child had been so affectionate, so wise, so tender. Now it is all like a dream: His mangled body is lying up on the hill in a stranger's tomb, and His enemies are making the city re-echo with their shouts of triumph. And through the din the poor Mother goes back home with breaking heart. The sword has done its work; her soul is pierced through and through as Simeon foretold; and her Son has, indeed, been a sign of contradiction.

20 VIRGIN MOST FAITHFUL

The foolishness of God is wiser than men. — I Cor. i., 25.

The Folly of the Cross. Mary was faithful to her great trust to the last. She stood by the Cross of Jesus on Mount Calvary: her faith failed not under that terrible ordeal. Mary knew God's secret: Mary knew that this crucified Man was, in this agonising scene, actually showing forth the power and the wisdom of God. Jesus rules the hearts of mankind from His throne on the Cross: and Mary became the Mother of mankind, the Mother of all Christ's little ones, when she stood by the Cross and shared the shame of her Son's death.

On Easter Sunday morning Jesus said to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: "What are those discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and *are sad?*" Jesus wishes His friends to understand that the Cross is a thing to rejoice in; and that to be downcast on account of suffering means forgetfulness of the fact that through suffering Christ was to enter into His glory. What that "entering into His glory" means we but dimly understand, but we can infer something of its grandeur from the intense way Jesus speaks about it. Christ's entering into His glory includes the sharing of the Beatific Vision with His friends. He already had that Vision Himself — even in this life — but now He is founding His Church, which is an organisation for communicating the Beatific Vision to human souls; and Christ's glory consists in His being known and loved by this great Band of Souls, both here

below and especially hereafter when the fight is over. Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, is fresh from His triumph; the ring of victory is in His voice, and He makes the disciples' hearts burn within them as He discourses about the humiliations of the Messias.

Spirit of Joy. The spirit of that lesson has lived on in the Church, has found an echo in the hearts of the saints, and hence we hear the exultant words of St. Paul (I. Cor. i., 23): "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a scandal, unto the Greeks folly, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The Crucifixion seemed to the world a convincing proof of Christ's powerlessness, of His helpless weakness; moreover, it seemed a clear proof of the folly of His claims, seemed to show that He was a poor, empty dreamer. In reality it was the crowning accomplishment of God's power and wisdom.

Weakness. Weakness means inability to produce a certain result, the absence of strength to overcome some opposing force; when the faculties of action are cramped or hindered. Napoleon was strong because he prevailed over mighty opposing forces. The child is weak because it is at the mercy of any force that comes against it. The Jews looked for miracles as a sign of strength. Their prophets were accredited by wonders. Moses could sway the forces of nature, could bring down bread from heaven and feed the people in the desert. So, too, Elias. But if you are yourself seized and flung into prison, and can do

nothing to save yourself, where is then the miracle? This is the opposite of a miracle. So far Christ's weakness. Now for His folly. Folly means wrong thinking; defective judgment, leading to distorted and exaggerated views of things, taking true for false and false for true. It involves a false conceit of knowledge, thinking that one knows that of which one is ignorant. Again, to try to secure some object with utterly inadequate resources is folly, and shows a wrong estimate of the means at one's disposal.

Folly. This was seemingly Christ's folly — He aimed at being a King, dreamt of a great world-wide, never-ending monarchy, spoke of swaying all mankind and bringing them to listen to His teaching; was ambitious of making His thoughts current in the markets of the world for all time. And yet the means He chose seemed utterly futile: collecting a small band of poor, ignorant men, denouncing the rich and the influential, thus stirring up such intense opposition that they must needs take His life. This was surely very complete folly!

A man at the head of a mighty army, the ruler of a great people, may indeed entertain projects of far-reaching import: Alexander may with some reason hope to conquer the world, Napoleon may without being dubbed a fool dream of becoming the lord paramount amongst the European nations; but when a weak, defenseless man, without authority or supporters or armed force to back him up, speaks of conquering the world, speaks of the future as belonging to himself, demands not only notice, but the personal homage and reverence of all men for all time

to come; when he claims to modify the laws of God and to legislate for the conscience of the universe, when he demands admission into the secret chambers of the heart and claims a right to direct our very inmost thoughts, and when the result of all these ambitious claims is a felon's death on a public gibbet, surely that is the very essence of folly, surely that is clear proof of a wrong judgment, of an utterly erroneous estimating of the means at his disposal?

The Greek world had planned out its University system, it had developed a carefully organised method of thought, whose central doctrine was the value of culture or wisdom. Nothing could be more diametrically opposed to such a system than Christ's schemes, with their seemingly futile ending. And so Christ crucified is to the Greeks, foolishness.

The Power of God: But to the elect, to those to whom the secret voice of God has spoken, be they Jews or Greeks, the story of the Crucifixion has a different meaning. To them it is the Power of God manifesting itself in a wonderful way by using such a means to convert mankind; *they* see the Power of God therein because their eyes are opened by faith to its meaning. The experience of their own soul is proof enough of the efficacy of the death of Christ; for they taste God within, they taste His peace and His joy, and they know that Christ's Cross has won it for them. We can conceive this power of the Cross as shown in two ways: in the effect Christ's death has had upon the world in converting pagans and Jews; or, secondly, in the effect the death of Christ has in obtaining from God the graces necessary to secure

this result: its efficacy in deleting the handwriting of the decree against us, its power over God Himself.

The Atonement. Now, the strange, overwhelming, and almost incomprehensible thing is that the violent and infamous death of this Man, who was nailed up to die as a malefactor, should have this extraordinary result of winning pardon for the world's sin, of securing the forgiveness of untold crimes. This death, this annihilation of a poor, weak man, could by its own force destroy Hell. This is intelligible only on the supposition that the sufferer is a person of divine majesty and dignity, and it is because of the divinity of the sufferer that the death of Christ is a force of such incalculable magnitude. Only God's Omnipotence could devise such a thing as *this* death. It seems like the last effort of Omnipotence to bring it about that a dying malefactor should be truly God, that the Infinite should manifest Himself in a finite, passible nature, and so be able to atone for sin. Hence, to them that are called to the light of faith Christ is the Power of God; Since Christ, the Man God, is the supreme creation of Omnipotence. In all other acts God communicates being, and thereby calls creatures into existence; but in the Incarnation He, so to say, uses His power over Himself, to bring it about that He Himself should have a new form of existence, that He the Immutable God should henceforth exist in a new, created nature.

The Wisdom of God. Again, to the elect, Christ even in His death is a proof of God's wisdom, of God's wise selection of means to secure an end, of God's true estimate of the value of forces at work in

the universe. God wished to destroy sin, and chooses this means of Christ's death. The world thinks Christ a fool, but in the event it turns out that Christ was the only wise man, was the One who had really weighed cause and effect, since by His passion and death the Beatific Vision is actually secured to multitudes of souls. And so history has proved the truth of Paul's words, since the saints (or those with intense light) are lost in wonder at the wisdom and suitability of this death of Jesus Christ to secure the end in view.

These hidden truths Mary understood; and her faith in them kept her true to her mission, kept her steadfast at her post beside the Cross right to the bitter end. And now she reigns in glory with her Son. Of her, too, we can say: "Ought not Mary to have suffered these things, and so enter into that participation in the glory of her Divine Son, which is the reward exceedingly great bestowed upon her by God because she has been so absolutely faithful to His law and His inspirations?"

Part Three

MYSTIC TITLES

21 MIRROR OF JUSTICE

She is the unspotted mirror of God's Majesty. — Wisdom vii, 26.

To give expression to our sense of Mary's loveliness, we have recourse to the figurative language which affection always uses, and summon up the image of various beautiful objects of the material world to help us to praise her. The thirteen titles from "Mirror of Justice" to "Morning Star" are taken either directly or indirectly from Holy Scripture, which is so rich in powerful imagery. And first we call Mary "Speculum Justitiae," Mirror of Justice or holiness.

The prophets of old spoke of the Messias as the "Sun of Justice." So Malachy says, "Unto you the Sun of Justice shall rise." A mirror held up to the sun is filled with its rays and pours out a torrent of light, and gleams and flashes like the sun itself. Yet all the while it remains a silver mirror. So Mary is the mirror set full in the blazing Sun of God's Being, pouring out on the world the torrent of light she so perfectly reflects. The streams of His grace fall on others too, but none is His perfect Mirror except Mary. God wished to have one at least of His

human creatures who should perfectly, so far as a mere creature can, reflect His own spotless holiness, and so He made Mary's soul, and endowed it with grace even above the gifts of His angels. And, therefore, she reflects most perfectly God's Being; she is the Mirror of Justice, because of the perfection of her supernatural holiness, because of her freedom from every flaw or stain that could mar the beauty and finish of the mirror.

God's Instrument. And because of this holiness of Mary, the Divine Wisdom, the Word that is the Second Person of the Trinity, came to dwell within her, and she thus became the *Sedes Sapientiae*, the Throne on which God's Wisdom rested when in her womb the mystery of the Incarnation took place. And by consenting to this great work, by becoming the Mother of Jesus, she brought down to us Him who is all our joy; and, so, Mary is the Cause of our joy because she gives birth to Jesus. Thus Mary is the *Mirror* of the Father, the *Throne* of the Son, the *Co-operator* with the Holy Ghost, in filling us with Joy.

God, therefore, has chosen Mary as His unique instrument in the work of the Incarnation. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," said the angel. She is the instrument or vessel of the Holy Spirit. Her whole being was filled with the Divine Spirit, as no other creature ever was filled. God's power wrought effects in her such as are unthinkable in any other, and she became the dwelling place of God, and united to Him by a bond which none other is capable of, since in her womb the hypostatic union took place.

22 SEAT OF WISDOM

They found the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down, they adored Him. — Matt. ii., 11.

THE Magi travelled guided by the star, and this guidance was to lead them to Jesus, the new-born King of the Jews. And when they found the place, they went in, fell down and adored. That was the culmination of the story; for this the star had guided them, and they had faced the long journey, to secure an act of profound adoration in the actual bodily presence of the new King, whom they found with Mary His Mother.

In like manner, the story of our journey across the desert — from the far-off land of sin and selfishness — guided by the shining Star of Grace — culminates in our finding Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and in falling down in His actual bodily presence and adoring. When you come to the Catholic Church, she teaches you this supreme duty of Adoration of Christ, and insists on your coming to that Presence, at least once every week, to perform that act of worship.

Adoration. Assisting at Mass in just this: — Coming into the house where Jesus is born, and falling down and adoring and offering gifts. The Mass is the central scene in the Church's life; it is the solemn public act which binds her children together, and it is essentially an act of Adoration. Hence, it is a time of hushed silence, because souls are occupied in adoring. The Blessed Sacrament nourishes the supernatural life of the Church, because it necessi-

tates adoration. Just as a royal progress is intended to kindle loyalty by the manifestation of personal respect which it evokes, so Christ's Presence kindles the true spiritual life in souls by stirring them to adoration. "*Christus apparuit nobis, Venite adoremus,*" is the Church's cry all during Epiphany season.

The Church is ever busy leading her children to His Presence. Other Eucharistic ceremonies, as Benediction, Exposition, Holy Hour, etc., are all calculated to stimulate and propagate the soul-activity which we call Adoration. This one word includes the praise and reverence of which St. Ignatius speaks — so that we may say, "Man was created to *adore* and *serve* God." Hence, when occupied in adoration we are busy about that occupation which is the real work of life. "We are about our Father's business," the work He has brought us into existence to accomplish.

The Church's True Life. The Catholic Church manifests her activity in many ways: in her splendid teaching institutions, her theological works, her great organisations for charity and social improvement. She may be seen full of zeal in the sermons of her missionaries; the voice of her preachers thunders down the ages; the feet of her apostles track distant lands to bring God into lives that know Him not. Still, all this wonderful world-wide activity is only a means to an end; if you would see the Church busy about her chief, most inward, and heart-satisfying function, go to Mass on a Sunday, see priest and people bent low in adoration; open the eyes of

Faith and see Christ Himself ministering at the altar, Himself the Head of the Church, Himself a man paying homage to God, busy in adoring His Maker, and then you see that which explains all the other activities and occupations of Holy Church.

So then all through the Octave of Epiphany she keeps repeating the story of the Magi coming to make their act of adoration, since it is a symbol of her own life. And each individual can reproduce this Magi story in his own case, by increasing his faith and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, by leading more perfectly a *life of adoration.* The world, with its intellectual systems, its pleasures, occupations, vanities, is a great organisation for crushing out and killing and making impossible the life of adoration. Just as a desert is a place hostile to life, and life can be supported only where oases occur with running water and vegetation, so the world is hostile to the supernatural life of adoration, and such life is possible only where the oases are found which contain the running waters of grace that nourish the verdure of truth. Those oases are supplied by the Catholic Church; her settlements are like islets in the waste of paganism: little homes of life amidst roaring sands of idolatry and worldliness. And those that wish to live must needs fly to those green sanctuaries, for there alone can the soul slake its thirst at the fountains of life.

The Fountain of Life. Now, the central fountain that creates the oasis is the Blessed Sacrament. Hence, the Church's first care ever is to set up her altar and offer sacrifice and bring Christ's Body to

her faithful children. Like Moses striking the rock in the wilderness and producing living water for the people, so the Church strikes with the staff of her consecrating words, and behold the Living Water leaps forth to quench the thirsty soul, nothing else than the Body and Blood of Jesus her Spouse! And then lavishly, unstintingly, she bestows this heavenly draught, this clear, satisfying, cooling water, on her children.

To realise this is Faith. And the inevitable accompaniment of Faith is Adoration. The intellect believes, the will adores. How different our life becomes when once we properly grasp the fact of this Divine Presence in the world! How different the whole world is to one who realises that He is thus in our midst! Just as the presence of a beloved friend lights up the home in which we live, and when that presence is snatched away by death the light is extinguished, the sunshine of life is gone, so once we grasp Christ's Presence in this dim and dusty world, then the sunshine comes into our soul — the sunshine of peace and trust.

The World a Sanctuary. For a man thus filled with Faith the whole wide world becomes a great sanctuary, made holy by the Sacred Presence repeated in myriad churches all over the earth. As the Magi lost interest in the ordinary business of life because of the new Presence announced to them by the blazing Star, so that their thoughts were concentrated on one question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" so when the star of Faith blazes out strongly in our inner world, other questions

cease to interest us; one topic alone absorbs our attention — to find the King and adore Him. We have caught a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem — we know its King is newly born into time, and we would see Him.

His birth is proclaimed to us by the star of grace, but He is hidden away, He is to be found only by diligent seekers, and hence we set forth to find Him. Once we have found Him, then our life is spent in adoration; we return untiringly to Him at Holy Mass, in Holy Communion; we come to receive His blessing at Benediction, to honour Him publicly at Quarant Ore. Above all, if God makes you a priest, then indeed are you given up exclusively to a life of adoration; then indeed is the world become for you the sanctuary of the Most High, since you walk through life stamped with the mark that sets you apart from other men as His minister, as one specially devoted to the maintaining of those oases of spiritual fertility which cluster around the Blessed Sacrament, whence the waters of grace flow through your hands to God's little ones.

23 CAUSE OF OUR JOY

Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. — Luke ii., 10.

MARY is Cause of our Joy because she brings us to Jesus, the source of all true joy. And Mary brings us to Jesus through prayer. The gift of prayer is Mary's great gift to her devoted children. One

might almost define interior prayer as the power of looking at the bright side of things, especially of other people's character and lives. It certainly is a very notable effect of prayer, this seeing the good in creation. And this is not surprising, since prayer is nothing but a clearer apprehension of God in creation; and to apprehend God thus is to see the right side of creation. The devil's unceasing occupation is to misrepresent the universe to us, to keep our attention fixed on the evil and the defects, and thus incline us to pessimism and gloom. Just as a man who hates another man does his best to blacken his character and misrepresent his actions, so the great Diabolus or slanderer acts with God.

Prayer or dealing with the Holy Spirit exposes the actions of the evil spirit; the light of God lays bare his underhand machinations. We are no match for the devil in cleverness, and because we pray little and pray badly we are often deceived by him. Gloom, worry, uneasiness, sadness are sure marks of the devil's activity. Peace, quiet, joy are signs of the good Spirit. Hence, the Bible is full of the spirit of joy, simply because it is God's Book. "Rejoice in the Lord and He will give thee the desires of thy heart," sums up its teaching. Now, what better thing can a man do in life than to preach this gospel of cheerfulness? What deeper charity can he practise than to give comfort to poor suffering souls?

Christ's Mission. Christ's special mission on earth was to lift up the sorrowful. "To preach good tidings to the poor He hath sent me; to heal the contrite of heart. To preach deliverance to the captives and

sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (St. Luke, iv, 18.) The world is full of broken hearts — hearts suffering from the cruelty of others, or from their own weakness, waywardness and sin; hearts suffering from despondency and gloom owing to ill-health, misfortune, poverty; hearts suffering from the weariness and monotony of their daily lives. And Jesus is sent by God to heal these broken hearts. He is the sunshine sent to dispel the gloom. His words are the balm, the oil and wine that will heal the wounds.

The Gift of Sympathy. It is a difficult art to console the suffering, to touch gently and soothingly the sensitive soul that is quivering under the sting of some great sorrow. Who can touch so gently as the gentle Jesus? This, He tells us, is His special work in the world, "to heal the broken-hearted." The God of consolation has become man in order to administer His sympathy in a human way to us. Think of what that means — the sympathy of a God! Surely it is worth being plunged in grief in order to earn His sacred sympathy. When He met the poor widow at Naim following the body of her son to the grave, He was touched with pity for her. How rich she was then! Who would not envy her her grief? To bring back joy to her sorrowing heart He raises her son to life, bids the hue of health come back into the pallid cheeks, the warm blood resume its task of ministering to the body, lifts him up and gives him back to his mother. Think of the ecstasy of that moment! Such joy delights the Heart of our

great Friend; to spread that joy is His mission in the world. "I shall see you again, and your joy no man shall take from you."

Tidings of Great Joy. When He was born, a bright host of angels comes trooping down from heaven, singing and exulting: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy; glory to God in the highest." And so the good news, the Gospel, breaks in on a sorrowing world, like sunshine after a long period of gloom. To Simeon in the Temple what joy the little Babe brought! See the old man, bent with age, taking the frail Child in his arms. Years long he has prayed and hoped; the Holy Ghost had whispered that he should not die until he saw the Messias, the promised Saviour, and now the moment has come, he holds the Babe in his arms and cries out: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant according to thy word in peace, because my eyes have seen the Saviour." And so Jesus brings him joy unspeakable. How the tears rolled down the old man's cheeks as he pressed the Child to his heart! What a vision opened out before his mind's eye of the long weary years of waiting and the bright future, when the influence of Jesus would change the history of the world!

The Good Thief. Thus Jesus began life, bringing joy to suffering souls; and He ended His life giving joy indescribable to the poor thief that hung beside Him on the cross. Here we see how faithful He is to His mission of healing the broken-hearted. Who more so than this poor wretch expiating his crimes by a felon's death? One would think his case was hope-

less, that no aid could reach him, no words avail to console him in his awful misery. But Jesus is all-powerful, and with a touch pours consolation into the robber's soul: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Moreover, Jesus gives us arguments for rejoicing, and points out clearly the sure foundation on which our joy is to rest. He reminds us that nature all around us is a great object lesson, telling us of God's provident care. Children have no anxiety, because they live in quiet reliance on father or mother. They do not trouble about the morrow, about food or drink, because love is caring for them. Jesus tells us we must be like children in God's service. The birds of the air do not store up in barns, and yet God feeds them. And what millions of them there are on land and sea! The lilies of the field do not spin, and yet they are clothed so gorgeously. If God clothes thus the grass of the field, how much more you, O men of little faith!

The Light of Love. What a new light this throws on this grey old world of ours! We thought, perhaps, it was little better than a prison, a vast hospital full of pain and misery, a place where men sit and hear each other groan. But see! The golden light of love is lying all around us, and we knew it not. Our Lover is trying to attract our attention, and we paid no heed! He Himself is walking beside us, whispering to our hearts, bidding us be of good courage, and we were blind and never looked into those Sacred Eyes, that are beaming with such intense sympathy and a love that shrinks from no

sacrifice for our sake. Why, life, instead of being a barren, sunburnt desert, is really a glorious romance, a golden song of God's love for the soul! His graces are all around us, His favours are pressing upon us, His joy, the great, strong, indescribable joy of God Himself, is waiting for us, in its fulness later on, but a little taste of it even now in this life from time to time.

O God, Master, Friend, Lover, teach us to look at life with Your Eyes! Open our minds to the great truth about our existence here below, now before it is too late. The years are slipping so quickly and silently into the gulf of the past; now, whilst I am strong and healthy and can do some work for You, give me light to see things in this golden light of love. Let me not be an eternal disappointment to You; let me not crush Your Sacred Heart with the bitterness of losing me; let me taste Your joy in my own soul and be an apostle of joy to the souls of others.

24 SPIRITUAL VESSEL

Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. — Luke i., 30.

We have seen above that the titles, "Mirror of Justice" and "Seat of Wisdom," are suggested by passages in the Old Testament.

The next three, "Vas Spirituale," "Vas Honorabile," "Vas insigne devotionis," are suggested by passages in the New Testament, such as: — Acts ix,

15: "This man (Paul) is to me a vessel of election to carry my name before the Gentiles"; Rom. ix, 21: "Or hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one *vessel unto honour* and another unto dishonour?"

Vas Spirituale. The word *spiritualis* in the New Testament has two meanings. It means either pertaining to man's soul (as distinguished from his body), or pertaining to the Divine Spirit, emanating from the Holy Spirit, and so exhibiting His characteristics. So we talk of the spiritual life, viz., the life which the Holy Spirit produces in us supernaturally.

From a comparison of various passages in St. Paul we may say that "Vas Spirituale" means: —

First — Vessel produced by the special operation of the Holy Ghost, a vessel all of God, from God, for God; a vessel not of human workmanship, but of divine; a vessel whose beauty is not to be appreciated except by a special light from the Holy Ghost.

Secondly — A Vessel filled with God's Spirit, in the sense in which St. Peter speaks in his first Epistle (ii, 5): "Be you also as living stones built up, a *spiritual* house," *i.e.*, a house or palace built by God and filled with the Holy Spirit, composed of spiritual stones called *living* stones, living by the Holy Spirit, instinct with grace, permeated by the Spirit of God.

So we call Mary, "Vessel filled with the Spirit of God." How intensely true this is of her! "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," and so the Holy Spirit shall fill thee up to the brim, shall make

thee His own in a wonderful way, shall become thy very life, and guide every thought and word and act so as to exclude all sin. Hence, the title "Spiritual Vessel" reminds us of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our own souls and of His guidance of our interior life. Every thought, word and act is, if we choose, elevated, purified, rendered precious in God's eyes by the supernatural co-operation of the Holy Spirit. We also are spiritual vessels filled with the fragrant wine of His grace and presence, perfumed as a temple is with incense.

Thirdly — This title reminds us also of her sinlessness: for to sin is to act against God's light. Mary followed His inspirations with absolute fidelity; her soul was the most delicate of instruments, and responded instantaneously to His slightest touch.

Fourthly — It reminds us also of her Divine Motherhood. As we said just now, she was the instrument of the Holy Spirit in another and special sense, for the accomplishment of the greatest of all His works, the Incarnation. He needed her in order to shape and build up Christ; from her the Holy Spirit quarried that Spiritual Rock. So that Vas Spirituale tells us of Mary's holiness and of her motherhood, inasmuch as these are the work of the Holy Spirit.

25 VESSEL OF HONOUR

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. — St. Luke i., 35.

In a peculiarly apt sense Mary is a *Vessel unto honour* in God's great household. St. Paul conceives of our souls as vessels or vases adorning (or useful to) God's Temple, some being of most precious metals, destined to dazzle by their brilliancy and perfect workmanship. The Romans set great store on vases of costly materials. They were of gold, silver, or precious stones, sometimes cut from a single gem. Picture, then, the soul as a precious vase into which God pours the wine of His grace, and which He sets in a place of honour to delight Himself and His friends by its workmanship and beauty, and you get an idea of the meaning of calling Mary "Vas honorabile," Vessel of honour — Vessel destined to honourable use, the most honourable possible for a creature — viz., to be the recipient of God's choicest graces and to become the home of the Living Wisdom Itself, the Sanctuary wherein the Hypostatic Union, the final and greatest act of God's power was to take place.

But, then, our souls, too, are destined to be set up in God's Kingdom, to please His Divine Majesty by their beauty. And the work of preparing our souls for this high destiny is being effected by God's direct action on our souls.

God's Guidance. When we see a ship moving steadily in a given direction, we know there is a guiding hand at the helm. So the Saints and Doctors tell us, when a soul is in the hands of the Holy Ghost

and is guided by Him, its course is strong and even, bearing down consistently and perseveringly on a given point; whereas the soul left to its own devices is full of inconstancy, its course is devious and irregular. Just as (to use another illustration) when reason loses control the bodily movements become fitful, irregular, wanting in purpose and definiteness. What reason is to the body and its movements, that the Holy Spirit by His grace is to the soul and its supernatural acts, controlling, regulating, and directing its motion. Without this supernatural influence the soul may be very active without making much progress, like a sailing vessel beating about the ocean, tacking this way and that, and getting no nearer home. This process of guiding a ship requires as the condition of its success that the ship answer her helm promptly. Our whole effort must be directed to secure promptness in perceiving and obeying the guidance of God. And this process of attending to God's inspirations is called Prayer.

Listening to God. Mental prayer gives time to the soul to listen to God's voice and His whispers of love. This voice can kindle the soul as nothing else can; this proximity of the Creator draws into extraordinary activity the latent powers of the created soul, and this supernatural activity constitutes our highest life and happiness. Just as the difference between the Sahara and the fruitful regions of Damascus consists in this, that on the latter there is great activity in the vegetable world, constant growth and life, whereas in the desert there is barrenness and death, so the difference between the soul of the saint

and the soul of the sinner is that in the former supernatural life is luxuriating, new plants and flowers are ever springing up, the waters of grace (like the rivers of Damascus) are producing lovely fruitage and foliage; whereas in the sinner's soul there is the black desolation of spiritual death.

To secure this guidance of the Holy Spirit we must be faithful to prayer. This is, I take it, the final reason for the necessity of prayer. It is the same reason as there is for keeping a lookout on board ship and watching the compass. Over-security is the cause of nearly all disasters at sea. Men know that rocks are treacherous, that reefs abound, that icebergs float down from Polar seas, and yet they steam across dangerous waters careless or indolent, and are wakened up by a rude shock to find death staring them in the face and their good ship sinking into the depths. This watchfulness for the soul that is cruising across the sea of time is exercised in prayer.

The Pilot. The pilot at sea must take observations, watch for lights on the horizon, keep a sharp lookout for breakers that tell of dangerous rocks; he must know the signs of the weather, be able to tell when the storm is coming. All this the soul, to, must do; and if it does not pray, then it is like the sailor that shuts himself up in his cabin to sleep, or stretches himself idly on deck and lets the ship follow her own course. "*Stay awake and pray,* that you enter not into temptation. For the spirit is willing" and wishes to be saved, just as the sailor longs for home; "but the flesh is weak" and indolent, and needs supernatural strength, which is given in

prayer. Prayer is the throwing open of the soul on its heavenward side, to allow the fresh winds of eternity to blow into and invigorate it.

We are standing on the brink between time and eternity, between the finite and the infinite, and we must choose to which we will give our hearts. If we choose the limited and the finite, then that shall be our lot for ever; and lest we should commit this folly we must pray. Every attractive thing exercises a fascination upon us until something more attractive comes, and then the former beauty loses its charm; earthly things hold us fast until we fall under the spell of the heavenly.

Recollection of Soul. We are insular until we travel and see the greatness and the beauty of other lands and peoples. And so, to save us from eternal insularity, we go to prayer — that is, we force ourselves to study the attractions of the Infinite. And prayer is often hard for us, just as it is hard to listen to and enjoy exquisite music in the midst of a babel of voices. Intellectual enjoyment, whether of a song, of music, of a drama, or of quiet reading, demands the absence of distracting sights or sounds. Such enjoyment requires concentration, and prayer means concentrating on God. Hence the meaning of the word "distractions." We are distracted when we are thinking of creatures instead of the Creator, of time instead of eternity, of passing pleasures instead of the supreme business of pleasing God and doing His will.

And so the saints prayed *incessantly*. The Being of God was to them a supremely absorbing subject of

thought. When men stretch out yearningly towards the infinite and supremely perfect Being, towards the ultimate existence, then they are *praying*. Those that pray well despise the things of earth, and the saints tell us it is a sign that we are not praying as we should if we are still much attached to ourselves or to passing things, such as petty points of honour or our own reputation; since the effects of true prayer are detachment and a spirit of self-denial. Hence, all the saints were very mortified; and the more intense their prayer, the more intense was their mortification, the more vehemently they turned away from earthly pleasures.

26 SINGULAR VESSEL OF DEVOTION

O taste and see that the Lord is sweet. — Psalm xxxiii., 9.

This title tells us of the personal activity of Mary co-operating with the action of God in her soul. Mary is a vessel of prayer. What wonderful acts of adoration and love constantly filled her soul! How tender was her piety, how intense a fire of love of God burned in her soul! This devotion was the result of God's action upon her. Because she is *Vas Spirituale*, the vessel filled with the Holy Spirit (and so vessel honoured above all others), therefore is she *Vas insigne devotionis*, the wonderful Vessel of Devotion — wonderful amongst the saints, wonderful even amongst the flaming cherubim and seraphim in the ardour of her longing for God. And

so we may turn trustfully, and ask her for the gift of devotion. We need it sorely amidst the coldness of this world. Those who are to preach God's word have special need of this fire, and must look to this glorious Vessel of Devotion for that warmth and tenderness without which their words fall icily, like snowflakes, on men's minds. The words of God's missioner should be like blazing sparks leaping from the anvil of the heart, and kindling the hearers to living fire. When St. Ignatius sent out his missioners, his last words to them were: "Go, and set all on fire." And if this seems at times beyond our reach, Mary can make it easy for us. Her great love for God can light a flame in our souls that no obstacles can extinguish.

God's Touch on the Soul. "I have seen the Lord, and these things He said unto me," cried Mary Magdalen as she came back from the tomb on Easter morning. That was the beginning of her Apostolate. Not till Jesus appears and speaks to us shall we be fired to do His work. Hence we should be ever yearning for His touch upon our soul. That is to us what the fire in the forge is to the smith: the essential condition of his work. When the soul is softened by this fire of prayer, then the blows of trials hammer it into shape; otherwise they fall on hard, obstinate material without effecting much change.

St. Ignatius Loyola insists on devotion as the foundation of all ministerial work. The Spiritual Exercises form the basis on which the missioner's work is built. And what are these Spiritual Exercises? Simply ordered meditations on the

eternal truths. A Retreat is a review of the soul's progress from its creation to its crowning in heaven. The central Figure and Subject is the Eternal King Incarnate. The thought centres around the kingdom of souls of which He is supreme Lord, not only ruling them, but giving them life. He is a King and also a Parent, nourishing souls with His own Substance. He has brought them forth to eternal life in grievous travail on the cross, and nurtures them with His own Flesh and Blood. But our intellects understand things best by contrasts; and so we properly realise what Jesus has done by a study of the black deformity of sin and its fearful consequences. By deep meditation on hell we understand what redemption from hell implies; the night of the loss of God makes us appreciate the broad daylight of Redemption, whereby we recover Him. By these great thoughts, by incessant, persistent prayer, by tender, pleading colloquies, by interior wrestling with stubborn passions, begging God with tears to give us what we most hate and shrink from, by self-conquest of the most absolute kind, the soul of the priest and the missioner is to be shaped.

Ignatian Training. St. Ignatius Loyola sent forth his disciples to the great universities and seats of learning. He would have them become leaders in the world of thought; yet Ignatius dreaded worldly ambition like poison, and would allow such aiming at eminence only on condition that the soul of the candidate was drenched in the healing waters of humility, had meditated long and deep on the bitter shame of the Passion of Jesus, had prayed and groaned with

Jesus in the Garden, had walked in strained misery along the Way of the Cross, and gazed sorrowfully on the Face of the Man-God in His death agony.

Ignatius remembered that it was by the terrible experiences of the first Good Friday that the Apostles were prepared for their work of converting the world. Jesus Christ, the first great Master of Novices, gave His disciples a rude training. He gave them the new Sacrament of the Eucharist to strengthen them, but then how He humbled them! The strain of the Passion was so great that two of the disciples broke down, and one of them definitely abandoned his vocation and died unrepentant, and the rest fled into hiding.

The Solution. And after the desperate blackness of this fearful storm there came softly the peace and joy of Easter morning. "I have seen the Lord." Think what that meant to Mary Magdalen after Good Friday, after the infamy of Calvary! "I have seen the Lord" — and what a look He had! I heard His voice, and what words He spoke. These things He said unto me." How people hung on her words, how they clung to her, demanding fuller explanation!

The Church tries to train her missioners as Christ trained His friends; they, too, must be placed in the crucible of humiliation and self-abasement, and only on the condition that they are really softened in this cleansing furnace are they fit to do the Lord's work, the supernatural work of saving souls. They have to bring Jesus Christ into the lives of men — of worldly, passionate, hard-hearted men; and to do

this mere natural forces are quite insufficient. Grace alone will help, that subtle force that goes direct to the intellect and the will, that invades the great central sanctuary whence man's life is controlled, seizes the levers that direct the rushing traffic of our daily acts and words, and by making men think God's thoughts and will God's will, brings about true reformation of life.

Everything depends on our thoughts. Sin or sanctity, heaven or hell, — the issue is decided by the things we think. Hence, if you would save mankind you must control men's thoughts; and to make men think the thoughts that lead to salvation no natural power suffices. Hence, the work of the apostle is a work to be carried on successfully only through God's *grace*. He must get into touch with God (since He is the keeper of grace) and open His hand and win from it this streaming influence and direct it to the souls that need it.

Propagating God's Thoughts. I say you must control men's thoughts if you want to shape their history. Of course, this is true in the natural order, too. That is the explanation of the public press, of oratory, of houses of Parliament, of all the vast machinery of speech and writing that civilization has built up — all is simply an organised system for controlling thought. But missioners of Christ wish to make men think the thoughts of God; they want to make men think the thoughts that lead to salvation, that move men to love virtue and hate sin, and to seek God before all things else. Now, you can convey to others only the thoughts you have yourself.

In order to influence others to think God's thoughts, they must first be your own habitual thoughts. Shakespeare has kindled poetry in many souls, but he did so because he himself was ablaze with the sacred fire. And so we see that the men and women that have led mankind to abandon riches, to adopt a life of renunciation, to despise fame, to succour the poor, to be lavish with their wealth, were the saints who had learned from God how to think Christ's thoughts on those several subjects of poverty and chastity and submission and charity to the poor. Before the Franciscan ideal could be propagated in the world Francis of Assisi had to think very intensely the thoughts of Jesus about Poverty. Before the disciplined obedience of the Society of Jesus could become an actual historic reality, Ignatius Loyola had to think strong thoughts on the subject of Obedience. It is the meditations of the saints that shape the history of God's Church; and it is *our* meditations in our retreats and our "morning watches" that help us to shape men's lives according to God's will.

God's Heralds. Even naturally speaking it is a noble ambition to seek to control the thought of mankind; and all literature and science, all research work, all publishing of books, reviews, and newspapers are explained by this ambition. Now, we, Christ's missioners, claim to know the right thoughts in one particular branch of human investigation — viz., the branch dealing with God. We are devoted to investigating man's relation to the other world; we want to teach men how to think about their *final* destiny. We are not really and finally concerned with

fitting them to be doctors or barristers, professors or civil servants, poets or preachers; our text is, "Man is created to enjoy the Beatific Vision," and we spend our lives driving home that principle in season and out of season. If we do other things, it is either because they help to secure our hold on men so as to make them think our thoughts, or else because, perchance, we forget our business and turn aside into pleasanter paths that gratify us, but do not really help our work.

And now a proof that religious-minded men and women are really doing fairly well this work of teaching others to think about God is that they are so hated by the world. Men dislike those that oppose their views. The world is antagonistic to Christ; its thoughts are not His thoughts. He came denouncing the world's principles, scourging its votaries out of His temple with sharp words of reproof. The world soon marked whither He was tending, recognised instinctively its great Opponent, saw that His thoughts would be its ruin, and so turned on Him and tore Him to pieces.

The World's Opposition. Three years were enough for His teachings to make themselves felt; worldliness could brook Him no longer, and the terrible conflict of the Passion ensued, when the world enjoyed its triumph over Him. That deadly opposition, that hatred at first sight, that sprang up between the world and Jesus Christ has gone on raging ever since; and wherever the genuine spirit of Jesus exists there the world is sure to mark it and to hate and persecute it. The world's hatred is the sure

sign that you have Christ's spirit. So we read in the Acts of the Apostles that Peter and John went forth after tasting the scourge, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. St. Ignatius, in the same spirit, hoped and prayed that his children might be always persecuted, might be ever accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.

27 MYSTICAL ROSE

I was exalted as a rose plant in Jericho. — Ecclesiasticus, xxiv., 18.

THE rose is the queen of flowers; its loveliness, its fragrance, its royal splendour combine to make it supreme in its own dominion. In the rose is locked up the very essence of summer. All the glory of the long, sun-strewn days that pass so peacefully and leisurely, when nature is clad in her richest attire, the air heavy with perfume, the sea a mass of golden light, all the intoxication of streaming summer is imprisoned in the heart of the rose. The rose has drunk its fill of summer's bounty, and spreads all around it the fragrance of its own loveliness. Hence, it is no wonder we call Mary the Rose of God's own garden — Rosa Mystica.

The word mystic means secret or hidden. Applied to things, it means that they have a secret meaning, force, virtue, above what meets the eye. Hence, the Christian Sacraments, or *Mysteries*, are so called

because they are visible things with a secret supernatural virtue.

Thus, the Mystical Rose means a Rose full of divine virtue, a Rose indeed for beauty and fragrance, but with a marvellous power exceeding all that we can perceive. The epithet "mystic" marks our inability to tell of the depths of Mary's perfections.

The New Jerusalem. St. John at Patmos saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and a voice said: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself with them shall be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more." (Apoc. 21, 2–4.)

We can apply this image to Mary's soul, decked with grace purchased for it by the Precious Blood of Jesus. The sanctified soul is the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, since by the creation of grace this holy interior city is called into being to be the tabernacle of God with men. Our soul is really God's tent or resting-place; there He dwells to wipe away our tears and soothe our pain. He dwells not there inactively; for God is a restless, never-ceasing activity. If the light of grace is extinguished and God departs, then the soul is a useless wreck, a house without light, dark and foul and noisome. But when He is there His Presence is operative. And the more completely He is master of this interior city, the greater the effects He produces.

In the civil state the first essential to carry on successful war or commerce is internal peace and good government; so in the city of the soul, if the government be not steadfast, if traitors and rebels be not kept in control, the exterior work of carrying war into the devil's country, the work of commerce in trafficking for souls, will be badly done.

This indwelling of God, this interior activity of God, this working of God in the soul, we call Grace.

Twofold effect of Grace. The twofold effects of Grace in the soul may be compared to the effects of the sun on the world.

In the first place, the sun fills this spacious universe with light and warmth and beauty, making it a gloriously radiant home for our brief sojourning. In the second place, the sun is the source of the myriad activities of nature, the succession of the seasons, the throbbing life of plants and sentient beings. Thus we owe to the sun two great benefits — the one an abiding habitual one, consisting of light and heat and comfort, making the world habitable and beautiful, expelling darkness and ugliness; the other a ceaseless activity ministering to our wants: ripening the corn to feed us, moulding the rose and the lily to delight us, filling the vine clusters with nectar to nurture and exhilarate us, and so ever providing for the needs and pleasures of our daily life.

So also God's Presence fulfils two functions in the soul — one the permanent function of making the soul radiant and beautiful, chasing away darkness and sin, bringing to the soul light and warmth and beauty; the other the function of actively ministering

to the soul's spiritual life and making possible its supernatural works. Now, the sun ministers to the life of earth by fostering the *internal* life-activities of plant and animal, and by calling their organs and faculties into exercise, whilst they by exercising these functions absorb the light and heat and sunshine, drink it into their being, and so produce the red roses, the golden corn and luscious fruits; so the Holy Spirit works in the soul, not as a human artist by over-laying the canvas with pigments or chiselling the block of marble, but by calling into supernatural activity the soul's own latent powers and faculties. The life of the soul is kindled to new intensity by the Holy Spirit, and by thus intensely working it absorbs the beauty and light of God Himself and becomes more and more transformed into resemblance and conformity to God's own radiant Being, until it, too, develops into a glorious flower, exhaling the beauty and fragrance of God's own sunshine nature.

Now we can understand better the meaning of the title "Mystical Rose." In Mary's soul God has worked and is working as in no other soul ever created (except that of Jesus), and is producing in her soul glorious effects, of which we have hardly any conception. Her soul is a separate universe where God delights to dwell. And as a result of this marvellous and perfect *indwelling*, He produces through her wonderful effects in other souls, since all conversions and all holiness are wrought through her instrumentality.

28 TOWER OF DAVID

And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end. — Luke i., 32–33.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM (of which He bade us say: "Thy Kingdom Come") is to be without end. For ever and for ever He will go on reigning and ruling. For He is in the truest sense a King. A king is great according to the influence he exercises, according to the extent of the dominions he can control. He may have to establish his empire by force (as did William the Conqueror), but his permanent dominion must be founded on the loyalty, the devotion, the love and willing service of his subjects. Now, if God wishes to be a true King, wishes to rule as a man amongst men, how wonderful will be His influence! How powerful will be His sway, not through force, but through love! We can measure the power of Jesus as King by studying the devotion of His friends, the martyrs, confessors, and other saints. And this wonderful interior devotion and loyalty and love is the fruit of the Holy Ghost's action in souls. The Holy Ghost it is that subjects hearts to the empire of Jesus, and His instrument is Grace.

The Throne of David. The Angel says, "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever." How is this true? In what sense could Jesus occupy the throne of David and rule over the people of Israel? In some sense, the throne of David

must mean spiritual supremacy, a ruling over hearts, since Jesus did not inherit the earthly throne of David.

David was King of God's chosen people, and Jesus is also King of God's chosen people, of those in whose hearts grace has done, or is doing, its transforming work, making them submissive to the King. In David's time the Church was limited locally; Jesus came and removed the barrier of nationality and the Church flowed out over all the earth.

David's throne was a monarchy in which Church and State were united. He ruled as an earthly king over broad dominions, but he was also spiritual King of his people. Jesus has inherited his throne in the spiritual sense only. And to His Kingdom there shall be no limit. The Angel is emphatic on this point: He shall reign over the people of Israel (now spread in every land) for ever. The people of Israel are those united to God by the bond of sanctifying grace, those with a right to the Beatific Vision. This wonderful monarchy that is thus announced is being fulfilled according as the history of the chosen people — that is, the Church — develops; which means the history of the action of God's grace in human souls.

At present, Jesus, like a general on the battlefield, is camped in the midst of His soldiers. From His resting-place on our altars He issues His commands to those that consult Him, He pays his soldiers and servants, and dispenses the munitions of war. The Church, which is God's fighting army, is ruled from the Blessed Sacrament.

The Eucharistic Throne. "We," says St. Paul, "are but His ministers; He it is that is ruling and guiding and controlling the Church." The Blessed Sacrament is — in the truest sense — the throne of David, the throne of Him Who is Ruler over God's people. And of this rule there shall be no end. We are to be His subjects for ever. That is our glory. We are enlisting in a service that will occupy our energies for ever, since Heaven means the highest and most active form of service — Adoration and Love.

And Mary is the strong Tower which this new David has built to defend His Kingdom in the souls of men. For that Kingdom is founded on the rock of Faith, and devotion to Mary is the result, as well as the safeguard of faith in the Divinity of her son. To those that reject Christ's Divinity the Catholic devotion to Mary is, of course, impossible. The supreme reason why Catholics honour Mary is because, for them, the Divinity of her Son is a fundamental doctrine; it is for them a living reality. When devotion to Mary decays, as in the non-Catholic sects, there also faith in the Incarnation weakens, and finally disappears.

29 TOWER OF IVORY

Thy neck is as a tower of Ivory. — Cant., vii., 4.

EVERY human soul is created to be God's dwelling place, and Mary's soul was to be (after the soul of Jesus) the most gloriously beautiful of them all.

All during her life, God was perfecting her soul by the activity of His grace, building up the incomparable Tower of Ivory that was to be pre-eminently the palace of His residence forever.

By considering, therefore, a little the subject of God's indwelling in the soul, we may come to understand better the work which He carried out in Mary's soul especially during her noviceship days in the Temple.

God dwells in a soul by manifesting His power there, and the more wonderful the effects, the more perfectly He is present. Now, to catch up the soul into Himself in such a way that it *sees* Him; to present Himself so wonderfully to the soul's intuitive faculty that it directly apprehends the Blessed Trinity by seeing God as He is, that is the Beatific Vision; and that vision takes place in the soul itself. Just as bodily vision is inconceivable outside the faculty of sight, since it is an act (or modification) of the faculty, so the vision of God is an act of the created intellect; and when God works to produce that act, then He is dwelling in the soul, and at the same time He works to make the will elicit the beatific act of love.

And since all *actio ad extra* is the work of the Blessed Trinity (of the one intellect and the one will common to the three Persons), therefore it is the Blessed Trinity, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, identical in nature, though really distinct as Persons, that dwells within us.

Sanctifying Grace. Already in this life the Blessed Trinity begins Its work in the soul; already the great

transfiguration has begun that is the dawn of the perfect day of Heaven, when the full light of the knowledge of God bursts upon the soul. And that transfiguration is effected by the Divine radiance called grace. Just as when Jesus was transfigured on the Mount, His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white like snow, the "light of God" shining around and through His Sacred Humanity, so that It was made beautiful with that Divine brightness, so the soul, in order to be transfigured and beautified, is filled with the brightness of God's own nature; and already in this world that Divine communication is granted to us. It is by means of grace that the Holy Trinity dwells within us.

We say that God created all things for His glory. Now, the material universe is for the sake of the immortal soul. The soul alone explains the existence of the world, since it is only the soul, the immortal thinking substance, that can *know* the universe and can honour and praise God as the result of that knowledge. The material universe is dumb and blind until man voices its praise. Man, with the power of thinking and willing, is the eye, the tongue, the heart of the universe.

On the soul, then, God concentrates His chief efforts; to the beautifying and perfecting of the soul He devotes His chief attention. For God's glory consists in His perfections being mirrored in the minds of thinking beings, who, seeing those perfections, are moved to praise, to worship, and to reverence.

Supernatural Acts. Now, although the soul can

know and praise and love by its mere natural inborn capabilities and faculties, still the knowledge and praise which are most acceptable to God are those exercised through grace. It is its *supernatural* acts of knowledge, of praise and love that really give God the honour to secure which He created the world; hence it is true to say that the soul is created to be the temple of God, the scene of His activity in the supernatural order, the recipient of His graces.

To have God thus active in the soul, adorning it with heavenly jewels as a bride decked for her bridegroom, whilst at the same time the soul does not actually perceive His presence and action, is what we call living a life of *faith*.

To have God active in the soul, and at the same time directly to perceive His action, to see God doing His work there, is the state of vision in Heaven.

So that Heaven is really within us; we carry it about in our souls, and the only thing necessary to transfer us actually to Paradise is the *lumen gloriae*, the new light that will manifest to the eye of the soul the treasure it possesses. Just as Jesus walked with the disciples to Emmaus, and by His words made their hearts burn within them, though they perceived not who He was, so our eyes are held, though the Infinite God that will be our joy forever is walking with us and doing His mighty work in our souls.

Hence, Jesus says: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say: Behold here or behold there. For, lo! the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke xvii., 20, 21.) When the Blessed Trinity takes up Its residence in a soul, then the Kingdom of God is come to that soul.

Dangers on the Road. Now, Jesus points out the dangers that beset the reign of the Holy Trinity in the soul. In the parable of the Sower He tells us of three chief dangers: hardness of heart, cowardice, and being engrossed in earthly cares. Three attitudes or states of the soul may become developed and hinder God's action — viz., indifference, fear, and earthly attachments. To counteract this triple danger, the Holy Spirit bestows a triple gift: the fear of the Lord, fortitude, and piety.

To meet and counteract the indifference that makes the soul careless about receiving God's word, the Holy Spirit bestows the gift of holy fear. A dread of sin because it offends God is the spur that keeps the soul sensitive to the Divine action.

Carelessness is the result of loss of reverence: when the soul is softened by fear and reverence it is receptive of God's Word; it receives eagerly and uses diligently the precious seed committed to its keeping. In the case of the five foolish virgins their too great security was the cause of their negligence and of their final exclusion from the King's Palace.

Persecution. The second danger to the soul is want of courage when persecution, opposition, temptation come. The word has not struck deep root; the fierce, broiling sun of persecution causes the growing corn to wither away. Hence the Holy Ghost gives the gift of fortitude, communicating to the weak, wavering soul the strength of God Himself in order to steady it against the onslaught of its foes. The soul can battle against the waves of temptation and can live a pure life in the pestilential

atmosphere of this sin-stricken world, because in the soul God Himself dwells, the Keeper of the Castle.

And then the third difficulty is love of pleasure, when the soul's progress is checked and hindered by its attachment to the things of earth, the cares and interests and distractions of this pleasant, bustling life. Worldliness is the danger here; and to meet and counteract worldliness we receive the gift of piety.

Piety is the gift that detaches the heart from transient things and centres it upon God. Piety prevents the heart from becoming dissipated, distracted, occupied with worldly cares; it brings to the soul the spirit of prayer, and fills it with the desire of seeking God in its own interior, and by constant intercourse with Him preventing itself from being fascinated by the bewitching of vanity. That is why Jesus so constantly insists upon the necessity of prayer. By prayer we turn the soul Godwards; by prayer we lift our eyes to Him and find comfort in this struggle against the attractions of created joys; by prayer we temper the fire of temptation, and strengthen our conviction of the emptiness of everything except God.

Mary's Gifts. Gloriously, then, were these three gifts — fear, fortitude, and piety — developed in Mary's soul, and through these gifts she has become God's Tower of Ivory; and we shall most resemble her if we allow the Holy Spirit to carry out in our souls the same work of grace so that we too shall be adorned and prepared as a bride to meet the Bridegroom when the time comes for us to pass away from the shadows of earth to the light of His Presence in Heaven.

HOUSE OF GOLD

Wisdom hath built herself a house. — Proverbs ix., 1.

The crowning of Mary in Heaven consisted in her being admitted to such Vision of God as no other creature had ever enjoyed. God Himself is her crown of glory. Her elevation to the marvellous sharing in God's life which the Beatific Vision confers we honour in the fifth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary. It was for this final consummation, for this spiritual marriage between God and this perfect human soul, that the Incarnation chiefly took place. This glorious union is the fruit of the death of Christ, the Man-God, since Mary's perfect salvation is the result of that death. And thus Infinite Wisdom has built for Itself a perfect House of Gold. Gold is the most precious substance used in the ordinary exchange of daily life. Man's most perfect work, his most honourable gifts, are made of gold. The chalice to hold Christ's Blood, the marriage ring to pledge vows of eternal fidelity, royal gifts that set forth the dignity and esteem of the giver — those things are fittingly fashioned of gold.

And so Mary's being is of God's purest gold. She is the priceless Chalice that will contain the Incarnate God; she is the Golden Ring that links God and human nature together; she is the Royal Gift that tells of His great love and esteem for us. And because God will dwell in her soul more contentedly than in any other, therefore she is His House of Gold, shaped to His use and made worthy of His Presence by the

elevating, transforming influence of the Vision Beatific.

Mary's Vision of God. Such a union with the Infinite Beauty is the reward promised to each one of us, too, in due time. Mary's elevation is the model of our own. Mary's own glorious Vision of God is itself a counterpart of that granted to Jesus. Jesus sits on the right hand of God in power and majesty; His soul is raised to the sublimest knowledge of Infinite Essence that has ever been granted to any human intellect, His will to the intensest love elicited by any created will. And after Jesus comes Mary. Jesus sits on the right hand of God because He is the King's Son; He is of the Divine lineage, being the actual consubstantial Son of the Father. On Mary the Vision of God is bestowed in intense degree as God's holiest creature.

What the intercourse is that God permits to His creature in the Beatific Vision we cannot at present conceive, since we know God so dimly here in the deep valleys of time. Not until we have scaled the mountains of eternity shall we understand what the Vision means. But all through this life we must keep looking forward to the day of our crowning. We must ever hunger for the Beatific Vision of God.

Longing for God. What an overwhelming thing that is to ambition! An ordinary accompaniment of intense human love is the feeling of being utterly unworthy of the person one loves, a certain sense of rashness and temerity in aiming at friendship and intimacy with one of such a noble character, with one so unselfish, so pure-minded, so generous. It is one of

the glorious and elevating qualities of human affection that it lifts selfish men and women to this enthusiastic admiration for the beauty of another human soul, that it can so concentrate attention on what is noble in others as to make one lose sight completely of their shortcomings and imperfections. What, then, shall we say (we who are God's poor lovers) of ambitioning the possession of the Infinitely Beautiful? How utterly unworthy we must feel in presence of this supreme Lover! Surely the very fact that we thus dare to speak the language and think the thoughts of deep affection about God must be a special effect of His grace! And by that grace God is training and fitting us for admission to the divine life of complete union in Heaven. It is God Himself Who comes and stirs the soul to long for Him, to dream of Him, to ambition the possession of Him. The whole scheme of the elevation of the soul to this new life is a thought of God.

Just as God's power works slowly but incessantly in the rough earth to lift its elements to participation in the higher forms of existence in tree and flower, so is He slowly and persistently working at this other tillage of souls, lifting them through a long series of preparatory stages to the final bloom and fragrance and loveliness of the Flower of Grace in Paradise.

31 ARK OF THE COVENANT

Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt. — Matt. ii., 13.

At this time Egypt was a Roman province, supplying corn to Rome and affording Roman gentlemen a pleasant health resort. In that land there stood (as they still stand) temples and statues that spoke of ages of dead civilisation and busy human lives, lived out moment by moment, just as we live ours. There were endless tombstones of dead peoples, granite monuments of their activity. Kings, poets and politicians, lovers and merchants, sailors, soldiers, philosophers, thinkers, and sportsmen all lying in dust, a vast, indistinguishable heap. Thousands of years of human lives were swept into the vast mystery of death, and the world still pressed forward eagerly as if lives had never been lived before.

Into this dusty land there came travelling one winter's day a young mother with a new-born child at her breast. Striding along by her side is the husband and friend on whom she leans for support. Into this dusty land, filled from end to end with decaying monuments of idolatry, of sinful worship of creatures, they come, lonely, unknown, unheeded. And yet these three are come to win back men's hearts and men's devotion to God from the abandonment of those creeping centuries. The people of the land had given up the elevating, ennobling worship of the true God for the foul, contaminating, soul-killing worship of animals and, lo! God Himself is come as a stranger Child to end this waste of souls;

He is come into a famine-stricken land to bring plenty to the starving.

God's Best Friend. And His closest, dearest friend is the woman who holds Him clasped to her breast. Mary is the Ark of the Covenant since she is bearing Jesus, Who comes as a Divine Plenipotentiary to effect a new agreement or treaty between God and mankind. This treaty will be ratified in His Blood, just as the Old Covenant was ratified by the shedding of the blood of victims.

"This is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." And at Mass these words are repeated ceaselessly down the ages, to keep us ever in mind of the great compact of Mercy which He has concluded and sealed with His Blood.

The Ark in the Old Testament contained objects that were evidence of God's Covenant with His people. Mary — the new Ark — carries the evidence of the new Treaty of Peace concluded between God and man, that evidence being Jesus Himself. Mary had the task of presenting Him to the world.

We may dare to think of Him as shy and shrinking at His first coming amongst men. What cause He had to shrink as He came into the sin-laden atmosphere of the world! In order to soften the shock, His Father gave Him **one** source of comfort, one deep well of consolation, one human soul to which He could turn from the black, appalling vision of sin and find rest for His Heart — that was the Holy Virgin, entrusted with the task of bringing Him into life and educating Him. Her soul was His resting-

place in His troubles. And so the Babe, in the midst of this pagan land of Egypt, nestles close to this pure and spotless Maiden. How He loved her! How this Child's Heart beat in unison with hers! And how Mary loved the Babe! How closely she pressed Him to her! What a comfort He was to her in the exile! And as she held Him to her, think of Calvary! Think of what the future had in store for her!

32 GATE OF HEAVEN

My soul doth praise the Lord. — St. Luke i., 46.

This was the beginning of Mary's Apostolate of Praise. The first word she utters in the Gospels after the Annunciation is this Magnificat, and the world has joined in age after age, helping her to thank the Blessed Trinity for the Incarnation. This life of thanksgiving and adoration is the true life of the Church, of the great supernatural Church of prayer. The world sees the external aspect of the Church, her buildings, her hierarchy, her splendid organisation; but the Church's real force is within. It is her praying children that form the life-blood of the Church. It is the contemplative souls, the souls bent upon praising and loving God, that made the Church worth founding; it was of these that Christ was thinking when He became man; they are His crown and His joy. The vision that comforted Jesus on the Cross, the prize that spurred Him on to bear His sufferings, was the

vision of souls that would praise His Father and honour Him by their love and devotion. And Mary is the leader of this radiant band: she stands rapt in ecstasy crying out: "My soul doth praise the Lord."

The Life of the Church. Day by day Mass is celebrated, the chief and central act of worship of those souls that love Jesus; the Divine Office is recited, and the great, strenuous life of the Church goes forward, all forming a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the Incarnation of the Word, for the elevation of Mary to the Divine Maternity, for God's condescension in taking on Himself our human nature, and for the glorification of our race in having Mary chosen to be the instrument of God's great work.

This great, strenuous life is a vast Magnificat ever ascending from human hearts to God; and this fire of love, this intensity of worship, these strong, earnest acts of thanksgiving, are largely due to Mary's example, to her quiet influence and her incessant, penetrating prayers at the throne of God.

Mary is the Gate of Heaven, inasmuch as she brings the souls that fall under her influence to live lives of prayer; and prayer is the meeting-place of the soul and God. She teaches men to praise God, to make their lives a long Magnificat; and so through Mary, through her teaching and example, men march, as through a splendid triumphal portal, to the Vision of God.

A great part of Mary's influence in making the world a place of prayer (as she has done) is due to her divine beauty. Just as an exquisite poem will

produce extraordinary effects for good, elevating and purifying the heart and mind; just as the story of a brave deed will go down the ages kindling the spirit of heroism in the hearts of succeeding generations, so the divine beauty of Mary's spotless soul has been marvellously potent in drawing other souls to God.

33 MORNING STAR

Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. — St. Luke ii., 15.

If God had not sent this glorious vision, and opened His secrets to the shepherds, they would have known nothing of the great event taking place so near them. Next morning they might have tramped into Bethlehem, passed the door of the stable, actually seen the Mother and Child, and known nothing of Him. Hence, to understand God's Presence in visible shape in the world, we need to be instructed by God Himself. And that is why we pray. Prayer is going to school where God is schoolmaster. The science He has to teach, the divine education He has to give, is worthy of Himself. He has lessons to impart that no one else can teach us, except our Maker, Who created our soul and rules its thoughts and wishes by His special Providence. And many a weary hour God has — like other schoolmasters — with His pupils! But He is patient with us, and rejoices exceedingly when one of His pupils

acquits himself well, and gives proofs of having profited by His teaching.

How familiarly the Angels address these poor folk, as if it mattered greatly that they should know God's plans! Did these shepherds become Apostles of the Truth later on? We know not. To God it is supremely important that each individual soul should know His Truth. If this visit served only for this, that the world might read about it for all time, and, by reading, learn God's views of the poor, His respect for them, His gentle familiarity with them, then it has served a great purpose.

The Divine Babe. "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, for this day is born to you a Saviour. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." You shall find the heaven-sent King and Messias, helpless as a babe and in utter poverty. His two characteristic marks in this world are weakness and poverty. We still find Him in the world, without pomp or show, pushed aside into a corner, finding shelter in a tabernacle. And when we go to the tabernacle and adore Him, then we find peace of soul and joy indescribable.

"They returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

The poverty of the stable did not scandalise them; their Faith was not shaken at finding the Messias born in utter misery and humiliation. They had a strong interior light that showed them these things in their true significance, the brightness of God lighting

up for them the dim mansion of time. Worldly people scoff at the poverty and weakness of Jesus Christ; the shepherds' hearts are overflowing, and they go back glorifying and praising God.

So it is with the Church in her attitude towards the Blessed Sacrament. In the Eucharist, Christ is lying in seeming weakness and poverty, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of material accidents, and laid as in a manger, in the narrow cell of the tabernacle. And whilst the world whirls past His doors unheeding, souls enlightened by God are prostrate at His crib adoring Him, and then go forth from those visits glorifying and praising God for all they have heard and seen. Thus the fire of charity and zeal is kept alive in the world, God's grace leading men and women to His Presence, God's Angels whispering to their hearts the good news of great joy, that in the Eucharist Jesus is come, the Lord Messias.

An Apostle. And we, hearing this good news, leap up and seek His Presence to see if it be true. So converts come into the Church, called by God's Angels. And so I shall get the strength of joy to do His work. We are apostles in so far as we glorify and praise Him for His goodness. To be an apostle means telling the world about God from conviction. What glowing accounts Columbus and his fellows gave of the Western Continent when they arrived back from their great voyage! How a lover of art can talk enthusiastically about the masterpiece he loves! How eloquent men and women become about things that deeply interest them! So must apostles be eloquent about God. And that means they have

tasted God in prayer, they have followed His guiding light, and have "found Joseph and Mary, and the Infant lying in the manger."

Non-Catholics often have a distorted, fanciful, fragmentary view of Him and His Church; they are mostly without His saving Sacraments; they are cut off from the ordinary channels of grace that are needed so badly in this world of sin. Now, if bodily life languishes when there is no food, what of the soul's life when it is deprived of its spiritual bread? And if it pains us to hear of starving children, how should it move us to think of souls innumerable starving for the true Faith, for the Sacraments that they have been robbed of by Christ's enemies?

The Gift of Faith. It is when we realise what the light and the warmth of the true Church is that we feel the misery of being thrust out into the cold and dark to perish. The saints were so fired with zeal, and were ready to make such wonderful sacrifices for souls, because they had strong light from God to see the value of belonging to the true Church. Our esteem and gratitude for our vocation to the Faith may be judged by the way we live up to that Faith. It is the fervent, earnest people that are most grateful for this vocation, that cling to it most passionately; and hence the saints, most of all, "glorify and praise God for all they have heard and seen."

But let us remember that one may trifle with, and even fritter away, one's vocation by tepid living, as not unfrequently happens. As we take our stand before this scene of Joseph and Mary, and the Infant lying in the manger, let us ask: Is my religion for me

the great reality of life? Is my soul constantly fed by prayer and adoration, to keep it from becoming attached to the attractive vanities of life? Is my soul steeped in prayer in order to save it from the corrupt, sin-laden atmosphere of the pagan world in which I live? Is Holy Communion carefully prepared for? Are my visits carefully made, not easily omitted? Is my spiritual reading a sacred duty, regularly attended to? Are my acts of mortification frequent? What about my daily acts of charity? If I am careless about these things, perhaps it is because I do not realise my vocation to the Faith, and am still, to a certain extent, siding with the great roaring world of unbelief that runs along the barren roads of this fleeting world, caring only for the pleasures of the moment; and that I am not trying to live only for *Eternity* and the Life to come.

Part Four

MERCY TITLES

Part Four

MERCY TITLES

34 HEALTH OF THE WEAK

The Mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine. — St. John ii., 3.

This title may be taken to refer to health of body or of soul; and in both senses Mary deserves the title. Lourdes, with its wonders, proclaims aloud to the whole world her right to be called the Restorer of bodily health; and the conversions innumerable which result from prayer to Our Lady show that she is the Health of the Weak in the spiritual sense. Mary's apostolate has been pre-eminently an apostolate through prayer. Her petitions, ever ascending to God, secure showers of grace for the softening of hard hearts, and the strengthening and comforting of souls already in God's friendship.

The possibility of an Apostleship by means of Prayer rests on the great fact that grace is the force that turns men's souls to God; such an Apostleship rests on the principle that it is not mere natural good-will or arguments, or mere natural energy, that help to spread Christ's kingdom, but God's own direct influence in the interior realm of the soul. And God works thus interiorly and efficaciously in response to prayer.

Grace is given as the reward of petition. Hence, salvation is due, in the first place, to Christ's prayer. Jesus pleaded for the world and won its salvation by pleading. And in imitation of, and in union with, His prayer, we, His friends, can win more and more graces from God, and thus help to save more and more souls, bringing them from darkness and sin into the marvellous light of Christ's kingdom. "No man can come to Me," says Our Lord, "unless the Father draw him." "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send labourers into His harvest." "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." "Our Father . . . hallowed be thy name, *thy kingdom come.*" This is the prayer which He Himself puts upon the lips of every Christian, to be said constantly all through life; by teaching us this petition He laid the foundation of the *Apostleship of Prayer.*

The Morning Offering. Jesus Christ's intense desire is to induce men to accept His teaching. And *our* lives may, by deliberate acts of the will, be directed to the object of propagating Christ's principles in the world; and to get this "direction" into life is the purpose of the Morning Offering. This Offering plays the part in life which the helm plays in a ship. The supremely important thing for a ship crossing the ocean is right steering. All the daily observations, consulting of charts and taking of soundings, are just for one object — to enable the officer to direct the ship's course.

So in the voyage of life. If the steering is neglected, disaster will ensue sooner or later. The

Morning Offering is a daily, deliberate readjustment of the compass and steering apparatus, whereby we keep the prow of the soul resolutely fixed on the distant point of light that tells where Heaven lies. In northern climes the Polar star is so useful to mariners because it is a fixed point in the ever-revolving heavens; in the firmament of the spiritual world the Polar star to guide the soul is constituted by the Interests of Jesus. His aim in life is our guiding principle. What He wanted, that is the thing best worth having. This is the basic principle of our Apostleship. Hence, daily we say: "I offer up all the prayers, works and sufferings of the day for the interests of Thy Sacred Heart and the salvation of souls."

Prayer, Work, Suffering. In this Offering we mention three ways in which we can win grace for souls — viz., first, by formal prayer, asking God to come and visit the souls of men with grace; secondly, by avoiding sin and keeping His law and performing actions pleasing to God and meritorious in His eyes, thereby increasing our sanctifying grace, and making ourselves more worthy to have our prayers heard; thirdly, by suffering, by acts of submission, trust, conformity when crosses press upon us. The effects of the Apostleship of Prayer ought to be, in the first place, to give a new meaning to life, since the brightness of a vivid Faith begins to shine upon the soul and to illumine its dark places. What a difference there is in the material world when dawn climbs the eastern hills, and night gives place to the radiance of a summer's day! So it is with the soul when the day-

light of a vivid Faith comes and puts to flight the dark night of worldliness and selfishness. In the second place, this zeal for Christ's interests will help to banish sin, for charity is the virtue most dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

35 REFUGE OF SINNERS

Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. — Matt. viii., 2.

MARY is the Refuge of Sinners; they fly to her and she brings them to Jesus — the Physician Who can heal them with a touch. In the Gospel we are told that a leper came to Jesus saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Sickness and physical decay and bodily suffering are spread all around us in the world, in order to remind us of the nature of sin. The material world is a type of the spiritual, and God uses matter to instruct us about the soul.

It comforts us to think that a leper came to Jesus. The word tells of loathsome disease, of a poor body rotting away, its beauty and glory gone forever. It is, as it were, a living corpse crawling to the tomb. Our bodies are doomed to utter destruction when laid within the soft, clinging embrace of mother earth. For the leper that destruction has already begun; the gnawing animal activities are already about their nauseous work.

This leper, repulsive and horrid to every sense,

comes to Jesus as a suppliant. That is comforting. So then I, too, may come. The leper's instinct told him he was safe; he was coming to One that could pity and could also cure.

Clean Again. A leper. — It is sweet music to hear the word when we are told that he came to Jesus. For I, too, am a leper; and the news of the courage of the man and the splendid reward of his boldness cheer me gloriously. He came and said piteously, in a voice whose accents told of depths of suffering and misery tasted to the full, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Then a word and a touch, "I will; be thou clean," and forthwith the harmony of perfect health heals the discord of his tortured frame; and flesh and skin are whole once more, the red is on his cheek and the light in his eye, vigour in his grasp, elasticity in his step; he is a *man* again, and stands up to drink in the racing wind that blows fragrant from the Galilean hills; and his eye wanders hungrily up to the sky and out across the blue lake and along the golden-tinted mountains, then down the long, sun-splashed street, where the faces of children are dimpled with smiles, and rosy cheeks tell of radiant health.

He is a man again, and life is washing round him like an ocean of delight, because the scales of disease have slipped away and he steps forth a new being into a new world. All because Jesus has said, "I will; be thou cleansed."

And that same mighty, wonder-working Voice is still speaking ceaselessly in the world, over the decaying souls of sinners when they kneel in sorrow and

cry out, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And Jesus says, "I cleanse thee from the leprosy of sin. I will; be thou clean" — "*Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis.*"

It is moments like these that help us to taste the wine of existence and appreciate its flavour, moments when God touches the soul and says, "Be thou clean," and the effect of that word is that our leprous soul becomes pure in *His* eyes. Then the Universe puts on new colour and new beauties for us, because the sunshine of God streams anew into our souls.

36 CONSOLER OF THE AFFLICTED

Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. — Luke ii., 48.

To sympathise with others one must have suffered oneself. Desolation of soul, the pain of loss, the sense of being separated from Him Whom we love, this is a necessary part of the purifying process which every soul must undergo before it is fit for close union with God. The dark night must set in and run its course before the day dawns. And in our hours of bitter affliction Mary is to be our consoler, and therefore she must taste sorrow herself. At two periods of her life the sword of sorrow pierced her soul: first when Jesus was lost in Jerusalem at the age of twelve; and, secondly, during the Passion. When she found the little Boy sitting in the midst of the doctors she asked Him, almost reproachfully: "Son, why hast Thou

done so to us?" This is the cry of a soul in desolation. It is desolation to find that Jesus has gone from us, that He is no longer in the company. They search diligently, make enquiries in all directions, *inter cognatos et notos*, but with no success. At last they find Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening and asking them questions. And all that heard were astonished at His Wisdom and his answers. And, seeing Him thus engaged, Mary and Joseph were surprised. Then Mary says to Him tenderly: "My Child, why have you acted thus towards us?" She does not say "*to me,*" but affectionately she includes St. Joseph as her fellow-sufferer, her friend in need now once again. "Why have you acted thus? See the sorrow you have caused us." And He said to them: "Why is it that you sought Me? Did ye not know that I am bound to attend to My Father's business?" And then forthwith He rose up and went with them to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.

The Nazareth of the Soul. If He left Mary His Mother thus abruptly, shall I be surprised if, for some wise reason, He leaves me at times? Yet I may venture to plead or remonstrate as Mary did: "Dear Child Jesus, why treat me thus? See how filled with anguish I am in seeking for Thy holy Presence; I cannot live without Thee; Thou art all my joy." In reply, He may chide me gently, but then He will come down to the Nazareth of my poor soul, and will be submissive to me, obeying my behests, actually treating *me* as if I were His superior. For has He not made Himself my servant? He says

Himself: "He that would be first amongst you let him be your servant, just as the Son of Man came, not to have service done Him, but to do service to others and to give His life as a ransom for many" — that is, to render the supreme service of sacrificing His life for other's salvation.

Then St. Luke adds: "Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men." Now, as years go on, Jesus should more and more clearly manifest His wisdom, His maturity and His beauty in the Nazareth of my soul.

Christ's Wisdom. My thoughts should be daily more and more His thoughts, the thoughts of Eternal Wisdom Itself, thoughts turned ever more and more Godwards and away from the things of the earth. He said to Mary: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And if I grow in His wisdom I shall be daily more and more filled with this absorbing thought of doing God's work. One strong thought often rules people's lives. The thought that I wish to see gradually rise to supreme authority in the empire of my life is this: "I must attend to my Father's business," since that was Christ's ruling thought. Hence, in my daily conduct Christ's wisdom should be ever more manifest. Just as at Nazareth Jesus was making progress in wisdom, inasmuch as His wisdom became daily better known, so in my life people should remark a greater manifestation of the wisdom of Jesus.

His Maturity. Jesus has to grow to the stature of manhood in my soul by my gradually getting rid of childish attractions and fancies and setting my heart

upon *God alone*. So St. Paul speaks of putting away the things of a child. I too, must learn to put away the toys of this world (that is, the things which worldlings love), and to set my heart on *God alone*.

His Grace. The beauty and fragrance of Christ should be daily more evident in my soul, before God and men. Christ grows in grace in my soul when my soul is more and more transfigured by the light of His Countenance, so that His beauty (like streaming sunshine) covers all the ugliness and foulness of my life. And just as His charm made itself felt all around Him in Nazareth, so should it make itself felt in and through me. His wisdom, His maturity of mind, His beauty were an ever-growing force in Nazareth. So should it be in the Nazareth of my soul, where He is living His hidden life over again.

37 HELP OF CHRISTIANS

Everyone that asketh receiveth. — Luke xi., 10.

The title Help of Christians was (says the Roman Breviary) added to the Litany of Loreto by Pope Pius V. after the Battle of Lepanto (7th October, 1571) in thanksgiving for that great victory of the Christian arms over the Turks.

The victory was attributed to the fervent and unceasing recitation of the Rosary by the members of the Rosary Confraternity, especially in Rome; and to mark the event the Feast of the Rosary was instituted and kept annually on the anniversary of the battle.

It is through the Rosary that Mary's children especially love to honour her; and Mary has shown by favours innumerable how pleasing this devotion is to her. Pope Leo XIII., in an Encyclical on the Rosary, suggests three great causes for the unhappiness of modern society — viz., the unwillingness of mankind to undergo labour, their unwillingness to suffer, and their forgetfulness of the supernatural life and the world to come. The Rosary supplies a remedy for these evils, since the five joyful mysteries set before us Christ's life of obedience and labour; the five sorrowful mysteries, Christ's life of suffering; and the five glorious mysteries show us Christ risen from the dead, testifying to the reality of the other world, and so turning men to faith in the supernatural.

Christ's Example. By Christ's example in His hidden life we are encouraged to practise obedience and willingly to take our share in the work of the world; from His Passion we learn to suffer cheerfully in company with Him; and by His Resurrection we are heartened to pray constantly and live in expectation of the world to come. Three hard things which are necessary for all — toil, suffering and prayer — are thus made easy for us by the example of Jesus. By taking up a life of poverty and submission, rather than a life of wealth and independence, He has taught us to see the golden heart of the work-a-day world. He has transformed the humdrum things of life by His touch. By becoming the Man of Sorrows He has sweetened the cup of suffering, and taught us to drink it willingly, even gladly, because we share it

with Him. Finally, by revealing Himself in His risen glory, He has solved the riddle of the tomb, has made us look beyond the black veil of death to the world of sunshine which we are to reach through that dread portal. By rising from the dead He has taken the supreme cross of life and made it into a source of joy. He has torn the heart out of the mystery and shown us the meaning of this awe-inspiring visitant. And by doing this He has given reality to our prayers. The foundation of prayer is a lively faith, a keen sense of God and the supernatural, and that Christ has given us by His Resurrection, and so in the glorious mysteries we learn how to believe.

So, day by day, we turn, in reciting the Rosary, to these three phases of Christ's life — to His working life, His suffering life, and His risen life — and in each we find strength to do our duty. No wonder, then, the Rosary is such a powerful devotion and influences our lives so strongly, putting beautiful words of petition on our lips and the strengthening scenes of Christ's life into our souls.

The Soul's Victory. The Rosary tells the story of Redemption, from Christ's advent in lowliness and humility to the triumphant installation of Mary as Queen of Heaven. At the Annunciation we find ourselves in the midst of the heathen world which God is coming to save; we hear the first whisper of God's great message to the human race. He sends Gabriel to tell His great secret to Mary, and Mary becomes suddenly the centre of light in the darkness of a world of sin. It was another "Fiat Lux." Mary is clothed with the brightness of God when Jesus takes

up His abode within her. This garment of light is not for herself alone, but for the race. In the Rosary she stands for us all: we see her there as the instrument of God's action in bringing about the existence of Jesus. In the scenes following the Annunciation we see her co-operating in showing Jesus to the world, since His obedience, humility, spirit of labour are all displayed in connection with Mary His Mother; further, we see her as Jesus' helper in His Passion and Death; we see her, finally, sharing in Christ's victory and raised up to partake in the great Vision of God which Christ came to win for us all. This is a summary of our life, too, and we hope to follow Mary in the way she trod: working and obeying with Jesus in His hidden life, suffering with Him in His Passion, rising with Him from the dead, ascending to Heaven to reign with Him for ever in the company of her whom He has enthroned as Queen of His blessed saints for ever and ever without end.

Part Five

QUEEN TITLES

Part Five

QUEEN TITLES

In the final section of the Litany of Loreto we turn to Mary throned in heaven as Queen of the Universe. As Jesus Himself was exalted after the humiliation of His earthly career, so Mary is exalted by God and placed on a throne of glory above all His other creatures. Although the angelic nature, being purely spiritual, is more perfect than the partly material nature which is ours, still God, through gifts of grace, can elevate a human being to a dignity that may surpass the supernatural dignity of the highest angel.

By the Divine Motherhood, and the gifts of grace accompanying it, Mary is thus elevated, so that she belongs to a grade of being in the supernatural world which is almost indefinitely elevated above the highest of the angelic choirs. And hence the angels bow down before her as their Queen. Just as they adore Jesus in His human nature as their God and pay Him divine homage, so they give to Mary the reverence due to God's Mother.

Those titles, therefore, tell us how Mary is honoured throughout God's creation. She is recognised as Queen by all God's servants without exception. Because she is Mother of God as well as on account of her virtues, Mary is fitted to be Queen of the Angels; just as she is hailed Queen of the Patri-

archs, Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, on account of the virtues that make her eminent as Prophet, Martyr, Confessor, and Virgin.

38 QUEEN OF ANGELS

There was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God. — Luke ii., 13.

In the scene of the Annunciation the Archangel Gabriel teaches us reverence for Mary as Mother of God. It is from angel lips that the human race (Mary herself first of all) learned the secret of the Incarnation. An angel first taught the world the lesson of adoring Jesus as God. That was a privilege which God granted to St. Gabriel. And Gabriel teaches us both by words and by example — by his word of reverence to Mary, bidding her have no fear, since she is God's chosen one and is to be the Mother of the Son of God, and by his words describing the marvellous supernatural activity that will bring about this wonder; and then by his attitude of deep reverence and devotion towards Mary, as Mother of the Most High God. "Therefore also the Holy One born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Hence we turn to the angels to learn Mary's dignity; she is Queen of the Angels, and they will instruct us in the duty of loving and serving her, who is their Queen. They are filled with reverence for their Queen because of her relationship to God Himself. And they see her transcendent beauty as a

Child of Grace, beautified by grace beyond all expression.

Angels' Visits. This, then, is the angels' first duty, to help us to know Jesus as God, to rouse, kindle, and support our faith against the attacks of unbelief. They are our guardians, defending the priceless treasure which we are carrying across the desert of time in such frail vessels and at such imminent risks from marauders. That treasure is Faith, and these trusty watchmen are ever alert to save it from destruction or pillage.

Belief in Jesus as God is life's supremest treasure, and that good gift was brought from Heaven by an angel on the day of the Annunciation. On that day the first human soul began to live a life of Faith in Jesus as God; the first human heart began to beat in unison with His Heart and to consecrate itself entirely to His service. On that day the life of Adoration and Reparation began, which has gone on ever since in the world. Mary was Jesus' first human adorer, being herself instructed by the angelic messenger.

Bethlehem. At Bethlehem the angels came in troops to teach us the supreme duty of praise and of rejoicing in God. They have not come to extol riches, but rather to honour poverty; they come not to promote a life of ease and self-indulgence, but rather to tell us the value of suffering and self-denial; not to visit the rich and prosperous, but to summon a few ragged shepherds to visit the God of Heaven in the form of a poverty-stricken Babe lying on straw in a manger. And in the midst of all this suffering and want and humiliation, to tell us that God wishes us to

rejoice, and that our joy is to be great, because of the honour to God and peace to men that the Child's Birth is to secure.

We listen to these angelic words falling like softest music on the bewildered ears of the herds: "Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people."

Here, too, God entrusts his angel with the pleasant duty of announcing the good news. And right gladly the angel fulfils his task. And we remain so blind and hard and indifferent whilst that news is echoing about the world! It was not for that night alone the angel's words were spoken; they were uttered then in order to resound for ever down the corridors of time, and so reach *our* listening ears, too. We, too, are shepherds sitting in the night of time, keeping night-watch over our flocks, the troublesome flocks of our thoughts and business cares and interests; and to us, too, God's angel is sent, mercifully, with the same comforting glorious message: "Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy."

And then, as if to show what we should do when we have learnt the news, the angels burst into song of praise and rejoicing. "Glory to God and peace to men" is the refrain.

Our one duty henceforward in life is praise, rejoicing in God (and in nothing else) and tasting the peace He came to give us.

The angels have come to throw open the gates of Paradise, to give us a glimpse of their own radiant life, in order to lift us up to God, to teach us how to seek Him, to turn our attention to the things of

Heaven. They are ever working to secure this, to win us from earth and make us seek the things of Heaven.

The Flight into Egypt. Then a little while later angels warn St. Joseph to secure the Child from danger, teaching us how carefully they watch over and protect those entrusted to their care. One might think that as Jesus was God He needed no angels to warn Him of danger, and as Mary was His Mother, one would think God might instruct her directly.

But it is not so. An angel is sent to Joseph. Such is God's plan.

Jesus is to become one of ourselves, and submits to the ordinary laws of God's dealing with us. He, too therefore, has His Angel Guardian, who protects Him from danger. This is a picture of what my angel will do for me — viz., he will guard me and warn me (often through my lawful superiors) against danger of body and soul.

And here again Jesus is our model, leaving Himself completely in the hands of His Superior for welfare of body and soul; and showing us that when we act thus, our Superior will even be divinely instructed in His guidance of us.

How he honours us! The same angelic guardianship that Jesus had we have too! As He was attended by angels, so are we! They are our ministers. "He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, and in their hands shall they bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." We are actually borne up in angels' hands, so tenderly does God provide for us, His brides of earth!

No wonder, then, that Jesus calls attention so strongly to this. "See that you despise not one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father who is in Heaven." (Matt. xviii., 10.)

The Temptation in the desert. Then, after His long fast, the angels appear and bring Him food, supplying His bodily wants, and consoling Him after the devil's attacks.

Here we see the angels' duty of helping us by supplying wants of body or soul. They constantly supply us with good thoughts and inspirations, whispering into our ears the things that help to frustrate temptation.

The devil, the world, and the flesh are ever suggesting their thoughts and ideas, and the struggle of life (for purity, faith, trust, and all other virtues) is just the struggle against these evil suggestions. Now to counteract these wicked, alluring foes, God has appointed our guardian angel, and this work of helping us to fight our spiritual enemies is our angel's chief work.

A Comforting thought. How poor and defenceless we should be if we stood alone in the hurly-burly of this terrific battle! But our armour-bearer and trusty Friend is there by our side, faithful to us in every danger. Unfortunately, we thrust away his proffered assistance only too often; but he returns untiringly to his work. What myriads of good thoughts he has suggested to me in the course of my life! — and I am so ungrateful for it all!

"They came and ministered unto Him." After the

storm of temptation angels bring us peace and joy and consolation. If we love those who bring us good news or comfort in this life, how should we love those ministering spirits that all through life are exclusively and disinterestedly occupied in this blessed work of cheering and consoling the suffering soul! It is thus they practise the divine precept of charity. The law of charity binds the angels too, and by the fidelity with which they perform their task they teach us how we should make our lives lives of charity, consoling and strengthening the tempted and the sorrowful, and spreading the spirit of joy around us wherever we are. That is truly to imitate the angels, and to live an angelic life. And so we shall most perfectly fulfil Our Lord's aspiration expressed in the petition, "Thy Will be done on earth as it is (by the angels) in Heaven." Angels do His will perfectly by practising charity perfectly, and His Will is done by us on earth as it is by the angels in Heaven when charity is perfectly practised.

The Angel of the Agony. But then there is that other aspect of our lives here below that calls for help — viz., our sufferings. And here again angels are our helpers.

During His Agony, when Jesus cried out to His Father to relieve Him of suffering, we are told: "An angel from Heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him." (Luke xii., 43.)

So, too, God's angel will help us to suffer and to pray in our suffering, and so prepare to drink the chalice which God may present to our lips.

The thought of intense pain to be undergone is a

terrifying one, and we are too weak to face such thoughts alone. *Vae soli!* But we are *not* alone; that is what God's revelation tells us; we are *not* to face the struggle unsupported.

A Spiritual Friend. With a strong, trusty companion, we can go anywhere and do anything! And so God supplies a spiritual friend to stand by you in the hour of pain, and whisper strengthening thoughts into your soul.

That is a reflection I must cherish, especially for the hour of my death-agony. It was in Christ's death-agony that His Angel Guardian appeared visibly to strengthen Him, and this is narrated in order to teach me to expect the same favour in my hour of need.

As God provided for His Son, He provides for me; for He has classed me with His Divine Son, has lifted me up to put me side by side with Him, sharing His privileges, His graces, His angelic guardianship, even His Divine Sonship. Christ has a right to the Beatific Vision, therefore so shall I. He is pleasing to His Father on account of grace, therefore I, too, shall be filled with the glorious gift of sanctifying grace, which gives me substantial fellowship with Him! *He* shares in the Divine Nature (He is consubstantial with the Father), therefore He makes me *consortem divinae naturae*, actually sharing in some mysterious way in God's own nature; He catches me up and imparts the fire of His own immortal life to me, so that I live by Him. "Even as the Son lives by the Father, so you shall live by Me," says Jesus Himself.

Angels at the Tomb. And the angel that comforts me in my passion will also stand by me in the hour of victory.

On Easter Sunday angels stood at the mouth of the tomb in Joseph's garden, clad in shining raiment white as snow; their countenances pierced the darkness like lightning, and they spoke words that thrilled the souls of the listeners, words of endless comfort, of infinite peace and consolation, words that fell on the weary, storm-tried, agonising souls of the mourning women like precious healing balm.

"Fear not you — for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid."

The angels' duty here is to encourage by announcing the Resurrection. Just as the Incarnation was first told us by Gabriel, so the Resurrection was first communicated by the angels at the tomb. Standing in the abode of death, they declare that Jesus had departed thence. And so the angels turn our thoughts to the triumphant, supernatural life after death, which Jesus is enjoying and is to impart to us later on.

"Why seek you the living with the dead?"

Turn away from the dead things of the world and seek Him, the living source and giver of supernatural life, in order that you, too, may live that perfect life of the soul.

The Ascension. And finally on Ascension Day, when Jesus had disappeared from view, two angels appeared and addressed the Disciples: "Ye men of

Galilee, why stand ye looking up to Heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven." (Acts 1.) Here angels exhort them to set about the work of life. Mere heavenward gazing won't do. You have your salvation to secure by work, and see that you neglect it not. He is gone to Heaven, but He will return to judge, therefore go and prepare for His coming. It is not by idle speculation that you will find Him, but by hard work, by acts of the will, by doing your duty well. You see the angels are practical in their advice and know how to admonish vigorously!

39 QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS

Blessed art thou that hast believed. — Luke i., 45.

In the story of the heroes of Old Testament history one remarks the great trust in God that is demanded of them in order to correspond with their vocation. In the case of Abram we are told (Genesis, chap. xv.) that a vision from God said to him: "Fear not, Abram; I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great." Then Abram complained that he had no heir: and God immediately promised him a son and heir. And "Abram believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice." Now, at the time, the fulfilment of this promise seemed impossible, but Abram trusted God, and all was well.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. xi.) St. Paul

praises Abram for his faith, and ascribes all his fidelity in corresponding with God's designs to that virtue. So that the outstanding qualities in this man who received this great vocation to be the founder of the Chosen People was his trust in God's fidelity to His promises. And this is just the quality that is specially praised in the Great Prophet of the New Law (if we may so call her), Mary of Nazareth.

Mary's Faith. To her, too, a promise was given by an angel (as to Abram) of a Son, when circumstances seemed to render such an event impossible, and because she *believed*, therefore in this Son she would be blessed above all women: just as to Abram it was said: "I will bless thee and thou shalt be blessed." (Gen. xii., 2.)

St. Elizabeth cries out to Mary: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." Mary, too, was called upon (like Abram) to offer her Son to be sacrificed. To her, too, may be applied the words of the Epistle to Hebrews (chap. xi. 17): She "offered up her only begotten Son, accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead." For this promise had been given to her: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary believed that this promise would be fulfilled in spite of her Son's death: and this could only be by God's omnipotence raising Him up from the dead. Mary therefore was the first to accept the dogma of the Resurrection, as she was the first to accept the mystery of the Incarnation.

Surely *her* vocation demanded faith and trust! And so every call and work from God means a call to exercise heroic confidence in God. And since faith and trust can only be tested by suffering, therefore the call of Christ is a call to carry the Cross.

40 QUEEN OF PROPHETS

From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. — Luke i., 28.

For long centuries God's friends, those united with Him in prayer, had looked forward longingly to the coming of the Messias, the Holy One of God, who would bring deliverance to the sin-laden world. And as they gazed into the future they spoke in wondrous terms of the mighty Prophet that would one day appear amongst mankind and bring authentic news of God and God's plans. The holy people who thus foresaw and foretold the Messias were called Prophets.

And now the time of fulfilment has come; and Mary, the last and greatest of the Prophets, is to witness the accomplishment of all they had foretold. She is to be the instrument as well as the witness of the fulfilment of prophecy; and then she herself will look forward and speak about the wonderful continuance of Christ's work in the world through His mystical body, the Church. She is to mark and signalise the effect on mankind of His coming and to indicate the plan on which He will work.

This great prophecy of Mary is contained in the "Magnificat" — that wonderful canticle of the Incarnation — which is at once an act of adoration, of thanksgiving, and of prophecy, as well as a remarkable self-revelation of the soul of Mary.

THE MAGNIFICAT

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour:

"My soul is filled with a deep sense of God's infinite greatness, and is flooded with indescribable consolation at the thought of His condescension to me" — that is, at the thought of the graces He has poured out upon me, since it is by grace that God is our salvation. In Mary's case that grace had wrought wonders as in no other soul, since it kept her absolutely sinless from the first. Her Immaculate Conception is therefore involved in the expression: "God, my Saviour."

Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid:

"Because He has favoured in wondrous wise His poor, lowly handmaiden." When God turns His gaze with favour and affection upon a soul, it means that He enriches that soul with His graces. It is a Hebrew expression, which we use also in English, to "look with favour on" a person — i.e., to be friendly and kind to them. So Mary explains the deep joy she feels in God's favours by declaring that His graces have been marvellous to one so lowly and insignificant as herself. One glance of the Infinite Eyes of God lifts the soul to supreme happiness. This joy

should be ours, too, when we feel that God loves us. A sign of recognition, a look of welcome and affection, means so much to us at times, it brings such sunshine into our lives. What will God's smile do for us? To live beneath God's gaze of smiling welcome, that is Heaven. To live beneath His frown of anger is Hell. His smile and His frown are two infinities; Mary's soul is filled with glorious joy because His smile has rested upon her.

For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed:

"And His graces to me are so wonderful, that henceforth all ages (when they hear of it) shall call me blessed, shall be astonished at His goodness to me." She is thinking especially of the grace of becoming Mother of the Lord, referred to by St. Elizabeth. (The "Magnificat" must be read in the light of Elizabeth's welcome. — St. Luke i., 42–45.)

Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His Name, and His mercy is from generation unto generation to them that fear Him:

"For it is a marvel beyond all words to tell, what the Almighty hath wrought in me. It is a supreme act of His omnipotence, of His sanctity, and of His mercy." Literally: The Omnipotent hath wrought wonders in me; Holy is His Name, and His mercy inexhaustible (*a progenie in progenies*) to those that fear Him (not to the proud). Her theme is God's power and tenderness manifested to the weak and the lowly, of which her own elevation is a signal example. This is the theme of all chosen souls contemplating God's goodness, viz.: His infinite perfections and

their own vileness, His love for them in spite of their unworthiness.

He hath showed might in His Arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent away empty.

"He hath wielded effectively His omnipotent Right Arm — i.e., He has done so, and does so still. His omnipotence has been shown in lifting me up; for so He loves to display His power, by choosing weak and useless instruments to do His mightiest work. For it is not those whom the world thinks great that Gods esteems; not its proud philosophers, filled with overweening notions of their own mental superiority; nor its mighty rulers, set up on royal thrones and swaying the world by force; nor its wealthy ones, abounding in good things. On the contrary, He puts these aside, and chooses instead the lowly, the poor, and the needy, and pours out His graces lavishly on them."

Three classes rejected. Hence, three classes of people are referred to as rejected by God: First, those filled with conceit of their own wisdom, *superbos mente cordis sui:* proud in conceits of their own soul, proud in the thoughts which their own spirit weaves; whereas good men live on the thoughts of God.

Secondly, earthly despots or kings seated on thrones.

Thirdly, the rich, whose hearts are devoted to earthly treasures.

And with regard to these, He scatters the proud,

He dethrones monarchs, He sends the rich away empty (Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire), empty of the only thing that can satisfy the hungry soul — viz., God Himself, and His grace.

Here you have just the three classes of men that belong to the devil in the two standards of St. Ignatius: those that seek riches, those that covet honours, and the proud. And Mary says God rejects them, all three. And whom does He lift up and bestow His favours upon? She tells us: The lowly (who seek no honour) and the poor (who have no wealth).

He hath received Israel His servant: being mindful of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever.

The Promise to Abraham. "His dealing thus with me is another proof of His mercy; for the divine mercy has ever been extended to His chosen people." The sense is: By sending Jesus into the world — to be born of me, a Jewish maiden — God has stretched out His hand to help His chosen people, in order to prove that He is not forgetting to show mercy to Abraham and his seed for ever, as He promised our forefathers He would do. Hence *Fecit potentiam* and *Suscepit Israel* may be taken to refer simply to the Incarnation, to the coming of the Messias, to the miraculous conception in Mary's womb. He hath shown His omnipotence in choosing me, a poor and lowly girl, to be His Mother; setting aside the arrogant spirits, the mighty rulers, the purse-proud rich ones of this earth. And by this act He is stooping to lift up His chosen people and thereby fulfilling the

promise made of old to be ever merciful to Abraham and his seed (the chosen people).

Hence the "Magnificat" has three leading ideas: —

First — I thank God for His graces to me — so wonderful that future ages shall ever congratulate me on them. He has wrought a work that is a work of omnipotence and of holiness (demanding due reparation for sin), and of mercy.

Second — He has chosen a poor, weak, lowly creature, setting aside the proud, the mighty, and the rich.

Third — Thereby proving that He has not forgotten His promise to Abraham that He would ever show mercy to Abraham's posterity.

41 QUEEN OF APOSTLES

And Jesus said to Peter: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? — Matt. xiv., 31.

The two most essential qualities for a successful Apostle are: (1) deep conviction of the truth of the message he has to deliver; (2) keen enthusiam for the work on which he is sent. And it is Mary's business, as Queen of Apostles, to keep the hearts of Christ's missionaries ever ablaze with holy enthusiasm for the spreading of His Kingdom, as well as unswervingly faithful to their deep conviction of the truth of His teaching. And Mary knows that the surest means to secure these results is to keep ever ringing in the ears of Christ's Disciples Christ's own glorious words about trust in God.

Let us study one wonderful Gospel scene in which Jesus instructs His Apostles in this matter.

It was the Paschal season, and so the moon was at its full: the little boat, buffeted by the fierce west wind, was struggling bravely to make its way across the lake. It had reached about half-way (3½ miles from the shore, says St. John), when Jesus came to them walking on the waves.

When He dismissed them at nightfall Jesus had gone up to a hill overlooking the lake to pray; so that He could look out across its silver moonlit surface and actually watch the progress of the little dark speck out on the waters. That boat carried almost the whole of Christ's Church. It carried the men whom He had chosen (and who had been given to Him by His Father) to be His friends and fellow-workers in saving mankind.

And Jesus was praying for them: He said at the Last Supper: "I have prayed for thee, Simon, that thy faith fail not." That is, He prayed for his fidelity to his vocation and to the faith, in order that Peter, being converted, might strengthen others. Peter was to do for his brethren what Jesus had done for him. This will be a large part of the priest's work, too, by preaching, prayer, and penance to strengthen Christ's little ones in the faith. Perhaps it was on this very occasion that Jesus was in a special manner offering up that particular prayer for Simon Peter to His Father.

Sent into the Storm. And Jesus had sent them out on the lake knowing well the storm that was brewing, but knowing also the remedy He had provided. "He

saw them labouring in rowing, for the wind was contrary." They were making little headway, and all was hard and comfortless in His absence. And then He came to them walking on the sea. They looked back, and were spellbound and terrified as they gazed intently at the figure approaching them across the lake in the moonlight. He rose and fell with the waves, and His dark shadow was cast along the sea by the moonlight. When they saw Him they cried out for fear, saying that it was a ghost! Intense fear often causes people to scream, as in the case of children. And they uttered a cry of apprehension as they caught sight of the dim figure. One can realise the situation — out on the lonely lake, far away from land, they rowing doggedly against the wind, at dead of night; not even the light on the shore to cheer them, and then this dim figure looming up suddenly and approaching the boat. Small wonder if it seemed very unearthly and frightened them.

Words of Comfort. Then Jesus spoke in a friendly, comforting voice: "Take courage; it is I; be not afraid." You see He does not wish them to be afraid even in time of danger; and He gives as a reason for not being afraid, "It is I."

How cheering His words were to those frightened men toiling and struggling at their oars! What a vivid picture this is of the soul labouring against a storm of temptation, dryness, desolation, interior misery or exterior persecution, and seemingly making little headway! Then Jesus comes, and the effect He produces at first is terror. So it may happen to us — for example, in time of Retreat. In Retreat

Jesus comes to us, looms up unexpectedly in the night of time, as the soul is tossed by the rough waters of life; and the vision of Him may frighten the soul (e.g., in Confession). We are terrified because we do not properly recognise it is He. We see a "ghost," a creature of our own imagination, and cry out in terror.

"*It is I.*" Then Jesus speaks in a friendly way: "It is I; be not afraid." "It is I, your Lover, who am come to assist you. I have seen you toiling helplessly, and I have come to give you strength and refreshment. It is I, your God, your Master, your Creator, your Friend, come in a human shape to help. So let Me enter your boat and all will be well. It is I who have power over wind and waves, and can solve every difficulty and trouble. Let Me come and put My arms about you (as about Peter); let Me come that you may rest your head upon My Heart, and in the beating of that Heart find a remedy for your terror." Jesus comes to us in His own way. He will visit us when and how we least expect. But His way is always best.

On the Waves of Time. So it is He speaks to us from the darkness of the Tabernacle. In Holy Communion He comes to us in the night of time, miraculously supported (as it were) on the unstable appearances of bread (as on the waves of Galilee): dimly glimpsed by us in the darkness: but He comes with soothing, gentle words of comfort. "I am here, the Saviour whom angels sang about at Bethlehem, telling that My birth was to give joy to the whole world; therefore, I bring joy also to you, My darling child."

How the Christmas bells should ring in our hearts at every Holy Communion! The angels' song should re-echo on the hills of the soul, telling once more the joyful news that He is here.

For that is what Holy Communion means: The Word of God come down from Heaven and dwelling amongst us as our Saviour.

A Frightened Child. The mother presses the sobbing, terrified child to her heart and whispers, in order to soothe its fears: "It is I, your mother; do not be afraid." And the child's tears cease to flow and its fears depart, because the mother's love reassures it. It is even thus that Jesus, the gentle-hearted Lover, speaks to us: "It is I, your Lover; therefore be not afraid." Let the sweetness of this scene on the lake sink into your soul. Say to yourself: "This is my Lord and my God — the God whose word makes the whole universe smile in radiant beauty to greet my soul! Whose thought has given us the rose and the violet, the blue ocean and the dancing waves, and the stars as jewels in the mid-night sky. Christ's voice is the voice of God sounding gently across the sea of time as He whispers: It is I; be not afraid."

The devil (as saints tell us) is ever fighting against this joy and peace of soul; is ever issuing contrary orders, saying: "Do not trust Him, beware of Him." So he spoke to Eve: "Do not believe Him; you shall not die if you eat of the tree of Knowledge." So he is ever whispering still. Whose command shall I obey?

Peter on the Waves. And Peter answered Jesus and

said: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters." A strange request! As a proof that it is really Jesus, Peter asks to be allowed to work a miracle! Or perhaps Peter was not asking a proof that it was Jesus, but offering to show his ready response to the previous exhortation, as if he meant to say: "To show you, dear Lord, how completely I put away fear, command me to walk on the waves to meet You and I will obey." And Jesus gave the word: "Come!" and Peter walked out towards Jesus.

But seeing the wind strong, he was frightened, and, beginning to sink, he cried out: "Lord, save me! Help!" And Jesus, stretching out His hand, caught hold of him and said to him: "Thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

That is: You asked Me to bid you come out of the boat; you ventured on to the waves because you trusted Me, and felt that in obeying Me you were safe. Where is your faith gone to? Is it so weak that a strong wind can blow it away? Why hesitate thus in your heart? Why not trust Me fully?

Quare Dubitasti? That reproach was a whip to the side of Peter's flagging courage, and surely a lesson also to the spectators in the boat, telling them how they might lean upon Jesus. No wonder we read: "Those in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying: Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." Jesus says, therefore, in effect: In this matter of trust, half-measures won't do. You must trust me *completely*, without hesitation or doubt.

St. James. St. James, who was present on that

occasion, insists on this lesson in his Epistle: "If a man wants wisdom, let him ask for it in faith, nothing wavering; he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea tossed by the wind." Was he thinking of Peter tossed on the waves thirty years earlier? The man that doubts and hesitates has nothing steadfast to hold on to. Peter, so long as his faith was strong, was like a rock amidst the wind and waves; but, once his faith died down, he was at the mercy of the elements, blown about by the wind like the waves. Therefore (adds St. James) "let not that man (the doubter) think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Tremendous words! When men or women finally learn this lesson of trusting Jesus entirely, without hesitation, then miracles begin. The gift of miracles is just the gift of unhesitating trust; as we see in the case of the wonder-working saints like St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Vincent Ferrer, and hundreds of others. And St. Peter himself learned the lesson well, as we see by the story of his ministry told in the Acts of the Apostles.

42 QUEEN OF MARTYRS

I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me. — Gal. ii., 20.

MARY is Queen of Martyrs because she shared so deeply the martyrdom of her divine Son; and we shall understand better what the passion of Mary meant if we try to realise deeply the sufferings and

humiliations of her Son. The Catholic Church keeps ever reminding her children of the death of Jesus. The image of the Crucified she sets before their eyes constantly from the cradle to the grave. And therefore, too, her thoughts are ever occupied with the Mater Desolata, the broken-hearted Mother sorrowing with the divine Victim, who is her own Son, in His terrible anguish.

History is largely the story of the excesses of human passions, of those fierce animal instincts that are latent in human nature and leap into dreadful activity when opportunity offers. Hatred, revenge, jealousy, lust, cruelty: these are the tyrants that sway mankind and help to mould the history of the world.

Now, what makes the story of Our Lord's sufferings and death the centrepiece of the world's history, the most awful and piercing of human dramas, is the fact that there we see wicked men following the bent of their evil nature to the fullest extent, and the Victim of their wild play is actually the God of Beauty. A story of cruelty in ordinary life is more dreadful when the victim is an innocent child; so the story of the Passion is more terrible because the Victim is the innocent Child of God, the stainless, sinless, sunshine Creation, in whom the God of Loveliness has summed up all that is beautiful and perfect in existence.

The Centrepiece of Creation. Jesus is the centrepiece of Creation, of the world of nature and of the world of grace. There is, on the one hand, the beauty of nature, the beauty that speaks to us in the fields of summer, in the peeping flowers, in the running brooks,

in blue sun-filled skies, in the faces of children, the laughing eyes of our friends, in the songs of birds, in poetry and art and music; and there is beauty in the world of grace, the beauty that is so elevated and so wonderful that it captivates God's Heart. Now, Jesus was the most perfect and beautiful of all God's creation both in the world of nature and in the world of grace, yet in the end He was torn to pieces by wicked men. How it should make us dread our passions, dread becoming the slave of one of those monsters that brought about the death of Jesus! That is why saints wage such war on self — like the lion-tamer holding in stern subjection the wild beasts he has subdued, lest, if he be negligent, they turn and rend him.

Three Passions. Many forms of human folly and wickedness contributed to bring about the destruction of Our Blessed Lord. But three passions in particular played a prominent part. First of all was the passion of hatred. Christ's sufferings are a terrible monument of how men can hate a fellow-being and how they will stop at nothing to gratify their hatred. Perhaps that is why, just before His death, Our Lord so tenderly recommends charity or love for our fellows without exception. That is, too, one reason why the Christian seeks especially to practise charity; because it was want of charity, cruel, pitiless, hard-hearted want of charity, that scourged and crucified Jesus. And for us it is a motive for making charity the dream of our life, this fact that the world so insistently, so ruthlessly refuses to love.

When we turn our eyes on Jesus in the midst of

this storm of angry passions that were leaping on Him to destroy Him, we hear few words spoken; but in those few words the note of intense love, mercifulness, forgivingness, rings out clear like a bell. No hatred, no revenge, no wish to justify Himself and put them in the wrong, but simply a prayer to have them forgiven. From the cry of Jesus on the Cross, "Father, forgive them," has gone forth the spirit that filled the hearts of His saints.

Saint Stephen. Let us take an example. A young, keen-eyed Jew is walking, wrapped in thought, towards the northern gate of Jerusalem. He is an ardent, religious-minded man, and he is going forth to assist at a solemn act of justice: the execution of a young heretic. He stands and gazes whilst the stones are being hurled at Stephen; perhaps he remarks the celestial beauty of the dying boy's look; perhaps he catches the faint words murmured as the face grows white under the cruel blows. They are the same words as the watchers on Calvary heard a few years earlier from other dying lips, from another human face growing white with excessive pain: "Lord Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge." And as the young Jew gazed on the scene, saw the poor bruised body lying motionless on the ground before him, how little he guessed what those pitiful dying words were to do for himself! The prayer of Stephen won forgiveness and the light of faith for Saul of Tarsus, who stood looking down upon and approving his execution. Such meekness and gentleness and charity the saints have learned from Christ's dying lips.

Hatred, then, is the first and most potent factor in bringing about Our Lord's death.

The Greed for Gold. But the sufferings of Our Lord were introduced by another passion — the passion of avarice joined with treachery and disloyalty. Judas contributed largely to precipitate the catastrophe of Christ's death, and Judas was a victim of avarice.

Here, again, we find Jesus' spirit in deadly opposition. He knew the havoc that love of gold would work in human lives. Hence He denounced it, and requires poverty and detachment of soul from His disciples. Now, at His betrayal Jesus learns by bitter experience how true His own words were, since the dread disease has infected one of His chosen friends. Judas is about to sacrifice Him to his own love of gold. No wonder Our Lord speaks strongly about avarice! No wonder religious life makes poverty its foundation-stone!

The Weakness of Pilate. A third passion also contributed to bring about Christ's death; the passion of human respect, or setting too much store on public opinion. Pilate, the Roman governor, was responsible for condemning Jesus to His worst sufferings. It was Pilate that sent Him to Herod, that set Him beside Barabbas, that ordered the scourging, permitted the crowning, and finally sentenced Him to death: and all because Pilate was weakly swayed by his regard for public opinion, was a moral coward, and set his heart, not on doing his duty, but on securing the applause of the crowd. And here, again, we have the direct opposite of Christ's teaching.

Humility of heart, love of obscurity, joined with liberty of spirit, that makes one disregard public opinion when there is question of doing the right thing — this is Our Lord's constant teaching. Pride and self-seeking are to help to undo Him; hence Christ's friends must love humility of heart, must definitely renounce worldly ambition and the seeking of human fame, must do the right without human respect. How little Pilate thought, as he rode that month of April from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, that the great moral crisis of his life was at hand! His life's course hitherto, the indulgence of his vanity and ambition, had been gradually fitting him to make the final terrible mistake, and hopelessly to misuse the supreme chance given to him.

Life's Crises. Our Lord reminds us often that the critical moments of life come quite unexpectedly. The foolish virgins were sleeping when the summons came; they hastily snatch their lamps and find themselves without oil because they had made no preparation; they had misspent their leisure. Death is the great final summons for us; and Jesus bids us spend our lives preparing for that call. A big battle is the crisis for which soldiers make constant preparation. Defeat is nearly always the penalty of over-security and carelessness in time of peace. So it was with Judas. How little he dreamt, as he went home from Olivet feverishly and joyfully clutching the silver coins in his bosom, that a suicide's death was to be his in a few hours! How pitifully he wasted his opportunities! And how swiftly the crisis came, like a tornado sweeping upon his poor defenceless soul,

which lay open to the attack because he had stripped it of grace!

"*Watch and Pray.*" And so with the chief of Christ's Disciples, St. Peter. He had dozed in security during Our Lord's agony — and now the storm had burst on him too; he, too, has been wasting his time; and see — he, too, is down in the dust, his poor soul shrinking in terror and weakly whimpering that he knew not Jesus of Nazareth. This is Peter who was ordained priest a few hours before, who made his first Communion last evening in the solemn hush of the supper-room; who had his feet washed by Jesus, the Son of God; who had felt awed and abashed at going through the ceremony. This is Peter who had seen the radiant face of Jesus on Mount Thabor, had been wrapt in ecstasy when Moses and Elias came and spoke to the Master; and now he is rebuking the servant girl for venturing to say he was one of the Man's disciples! The girl had picked up the tone from the soldiers and officers whom she overheard discussing the case. They were all loud in their condemnation of this man who had so disturbed the public peace; and consequently she reproaches Peter with being one of His followers.

"*Lovest Thou Me?*" How the memory of this scene must have haunted Peter all through life! And how sweet, how deep, how tender the forgivingness of Christ that could wipe out the sting of it! What a healer love is! What salve it has for the most cruel and painful wounds! What a strong helper this Man of Love is! How our poor human hearts can turn to Him for consolation! Devotion to

the Heart of Jesus means growing in knowledge of His character coming to know what His love means. How well St. Peter practised this devotion, how he tasted the large generosity, the ocean-wide forgiving affection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! The very word affection is full of healing for us, and we turn to Our Lord to get in its purity that priceless thing that is the very breath of our life. We want to know that someone has a true affection for us, and that is just what Jesus has to offer.

We can each of us repeat with St. Paul:

"He loved me and gave Himself up for me."

43 QUEEN OF CONFESSORS

"A woman clothed with the sun." — Apoc. xii., 1.

The Heart of Mary stands for Mary's interior dispositions, her purity, charity, humility, faith. The world honours people largely for their external qualities — namely, either for bodily perfection and attractiveness, such as beauty, strength, agility; or for intellectual qualities which result in exterior effects, such as the skill of poet, painter, musician, architect, or engineer, of the prosperous farmer, the successful merchant, the popular orator. Or, again, it admires certain moral qualities which also show themselves exteriorly, as courage in the soldier, self-control in the ruler, justice and mercy in the legislator.

Interior Virtues. But Jesus Christ came to insist that it is not these qualities of heart and mind and will

that really matter — the merely natural qualities which are called into play when man is brought into contact with the various phases of life — but that it is the interior dispositions of soul resulting from man's relationship to God that are supremely important, such as faith, hope, purity of heart, humility, obedience, charity, and trust.

Now, it is just those spiritual qualities we mean when we talk of honouring the Heart of Mary. It means that we honour her not because of her outward beauty, even though her face was one the angels loved to gaze upon, being the mirror of her sinless soul; nor of her excellence in household management, or the perfection of her other external works, though in these, too, she was a model; but that we honour her primarily and especially on account of the interior qualities of soul that result from her converse with God. We honour her because she, more than any other creature, was a fit dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost; because by His presence He produced in her soul more excellent effects than in any other created being.

Mary's Excellence. We praise and thank God, therefore, in the first place, for her glorious purity of heart. Worldly people make no account of this interior purity. By them a certain standard of mere external decency is set up, a certain decorum has to be observed, which simply means that you must not misbehave in public, that you must take care to hide your sins from others.

But as for any solicitude about true internal cleanness of heart, which restrains the wandering imagina-

tion and regards sins of thought as truly sins, that kind of thing does not exist for the worldling. But for the follower of Jesus Christ this internal purity is the main thing.

He cares little for what men think; he cares everything for what God thinks.

The Means. And the means supplied to enable us to maintain this internal purity of soul is the Sacrament of Confession. In no place in the world is the soul so stripped of self-love and the pleas of selfishness set aside so sincerely as in the confessional. There the soul tries to see itself as God sees it. When we prepare for Confession the question is not: What do others think of me? but, How do I stand with God? Is my soul clear of guilt in His presence? And Sacramental Absolution is such a wonderful thing because it is an assurance, on the part of one duly authorised and empowered to make the statement, that all is well between us and God.

Speculum Justitiæ. By every good confession we are making a further effort to imitate the purity of heart of Mary the Mother of God. Her soul was absolutely stainless; it was a spotless mirror that reflected perfectly the light of God. In the case of other souls the mirror is flawed or broken or covered with spots that hinder it from properly reflecting the divine sunshine. But Mary is His perfect mirror, Speculum Justitiæ, flawless and beautiful. Now, how did Mary succeed in preserving this great purity of heart? The answer is: By her close union with God, by her life of prayer. God alone can safeguard the soul against its enemies. A soul is a prize of such

value, the powers of evil are so bent on securing it for themselves, that no less than infinite strength can sufficiently protect it.

Guarding Treasure. Thieves aim at precious booty. The bank vaults and strongrooms in which gold coin and bullion are stored must be guarded by strong patrols. In London, at the Bank of England, a strong military detachment is ever on duty. In the basement of the Woolworth building in New York city are the strongroom premises of a certain company that undertakes to safeguard money and valuables. Its safes are colossal in size and structure, with huge steel doors, massive locks and bolts — all so strong because the treasure to be guarded is so valuable. The soul is the supremest treasure in the universe. God has created nothing more valuable. The soul is God's treasure, just as gold and jewels are man's treasure. And in proportion to the value of the soul are the efforts of robbers to capture it. What strength can guard it except the strength of God?

Mary's Safety. And so in Mary's case. She owes her safety from all attacks of evil to the special protection of God. Mary is sinless because she prayed so excellently. The road to sanctity was the same for her as it is for us — close union with God. Now, the purity of Mary's soul was the preparation for her intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the Man who was holy with the holiness of God. And when she became His Mother, a new force was given her to safeguard her purity of soul — namely, her contact with Jesus.

And if we are called upon to follow in her footsteps in this matter of freedom from internal sins, it is comforting to reflect that we, too, have the same means at our disposal for preserving our purity of soul — viz., personal and intimate contact with Jesus. The Blessed Sacrament does for us what His visible bodily presence did for Mary. None need despair of avoiding sin when such a marvellous source of strength is within reach.

A Story. A story is told of a Protestant woman in Australia who had a Catholic friend, a business girl, whom she used to see going to daily Mass and also at times paying a visit to the church. The Protestant lady asked her one day: "Why do you go so often to church? Could you not pray just as well at home, in the privacy of your room?" The Catholic girl explained that going to church made a difference, because there Jesus Christ is actually bodily present; and explained to her the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence. The Protestant woman said: "Oh! if that were true, life on earth would be a Paradise. To be able to come into direct contact with Jesus Himself!" And faith in the Real Presence began to come to her. Soon after that she sought admission into the Church. One of her daughters bitterly opposed her conversion; now that daughter is herself a Catholic nun.

Conclusion. Hence we conclude that if God demands something very difficult in asking us to aim at perfect purity of soul in the midst of a sinful world, still He has provided us with means so wonderful as to make the miracle possible — namely,

His own Body and Blood to be the food of the soul. And the Church's glorious list of Confessors, of Saints (that is) who, without shedding their blood for Christ, confessed His faith in their lives by the exercise of heroic virtues — these are a standing proof of the strength which Christ's Sacraments can give to weak men and women to enable them to follow in the pathway of perfection and purity of soul traced out by Mary, Queen of Confessors.

44 QUEEN OF VIRGINS

These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. — Apoc. xiv., 4.

To choose a life of virginity for the love of God means turning away definitely and resolutely from the sensible pleasures of earth and their entanglements in order to keep the soul free to concentrate upon God and heavenly things. It means a rising up from all mere worldly and temporal occupations to go forth to seek the Lord and Master of the Universe in His own Creation in order to adore Him. It means that the soul stops to listen to God's word, tries to dispose itself to receive the seed of that divine word into its own being and let that word fructify there and produce a glorious harvest of virtues to delight its heavenly Lover.

Mary is Queen of Virgins because she more resolutely and more perfectly than any other turned away from every thought or inclination that might in the least hinder or retard the flight of her soul to God:

she more perfectly than any other accepted the seed of God's word and through it brought forth fruit in abundance.

Parable of the Sower. In the parable of the Sower (St. Matt. chap. xiii.) Jesus points out three great obstacles to the fruitfulness of God's word in the soul of men. First, hardness of heart which makes them refuse to listen to God's Revelation. In its extreme form we call this rationalism, naturalism, atheism. Secondly, weakness or cowardice under temptation and persecution. And thirdly, distraction of soul when one is preoccupied with the cares and pleasures of life.

The opposite of these tendencies are: First, simple, childlike faith, realising spiritual things vividly, and living in the supernatural world. Secondly, unshakable confidence in God in spite of darkness, desolation and temptation. Thirdly, resolute securing of one's liberty of soul, putting aside and shaking oneself free from engrossing, distracting objects that tend to absorb one's attention and fill up one's time to the exclusion of God.

The Soul of Jesus. The seed of God's word, that is, the truth about Himself, communicated by God to His creatures, has been fruitful in the fullest and highest degree in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the perfect type of the seed producing its full fruit. He listened to the word perfectly; it was His soul's only food. Then, too, He was not dismayed by bitter temptations but sought His Father with absolute trust in the midst of the worst storms. Witness His dying cry: "Father, into thy hands I commend my

spirit." And lastly, the cares and riches and pleasures of life had no hold upon Him. He put them aside in order to fulfill perfectly His Father's will.

Mary's perfect Service. After Jesus, God's word has produced its most perfect fruit in the soul of Mary His Mother. She listened eagerly to the first whisper of the divine message — of God revealing Himself to the mind He had created. She caught up the meaning of the message and began at once to shape her life in accordance with its teaching. The devil had no power to steal the word from her, because her soul was so attentive to the accents of the Divine Lover. Every syllable she drank in eagerly, and Faith blazed in her at its very brightest. For Faith means accepting God's word simply and fully, believing His teaching without reserve or questioning.

God found no defect in Mary's Faith. It is revealed to us in all its strength and beauty in the story of the great crisis described in St. Luke's first chapter — the coming of the Infinite into her life in such a marvellous way when God asked her to be His Mother and to take up the awful responsibility of divine Maternity. In that great episode her Faith is especially praised, "Blessed art thou that hast believed."

Her Great Hope. Buoyed up by this great Faith her will was like steel amidst the appalling trials that fell to her lot. In her soul God's word found no shallowness of soil; it struck strong, deep roots, and when storms and suffering came the ripe corn merely bent beneath the stress to rise up again in golden beauty, radiant in the sunshine of God's grace.

Along with Faith God found in her unshakable trust and hope.

A Soul of Prayer. And in the third place there was no worldliness in Mary's soul: no tendency to let the cares and business and pleasures of this fleeting show interfere with the growth of the good seed. Her soul was fenced in from all earthly distractions; she lived a life of perfect recollection. She was the first great religious. All other religious men and women since her day have been trying to imitate the perfect seclusion of Mary's soul. In her, therefore, were perfectly fulfilled the words of Jesus: "That in the good ground are they who in a good and very good heart hearing the word keep it and bring forth fruit in patience."

A New Canticle. In living thus a life of Faith and trust and recollection Mary was setting an example which all the Saints would imitate, and especially those who belong to that sacred band who sing a new canticle not given to others to sing and who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. For those consecrated to a life of Virginity for God's sake are just those men and women who like Mary listen to God's word, keep it carefully, use it diligently and thus bring forth fruit in patience. Mary is Queen of Virgins because she more perfectly and faithfully than any other Saint has thus made use of God's precious gift.

And if we too wish to be numbered in that radiant band of people who look to Mary as their Queen, then we too must see to it that God's word produces abundant fruit in our lives.

45 QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. — Apoc. xxi., 4.

It is characteristic of St. John's Gospel that it opens to the sound of wedding bells. John was about to write the romance of God's love for the Bride soul, and an earthly bridal furnishes him with his starting point, suggesting the Divine Espousals which are to be his theme.

Wedding Bells. Who was the young bride at Cana? And who the happy bridegroom on that festive day? No man can tell. The story lies buried in the deeps of time like a star in the far regions of space, shining still and guiding us by its light: but the details are shadowy and vague. The guests danced and laughed and amused themselves; they speculated on the future: young hearts beat happily and young eyes sparkled, and tender words were spoken and joyous sounds of laughter echoed through the house. And all the while Jesus sat amidst the guests, and near Him His Mother. They sat there all unknown in the midst of the noise and the chatter. Jesus, a Divine Person, the Maker and Ruler of the Universe, sat there watching it all, reading every heart, weighing every act and yearning to win each of those human souls for Himself and His service. He was in their midst and they knew Him not. This is a type of the world since the Incarnation, Jesus sits ever at the feast of life and men heed Him not nor care aught for His presence.

God with Us. This scene makes us realise better

how God by becoming man wished to place Himself on a level with us, to come into our daily lives, to share our interests. We finite petty creatures could not raise ourselves up to Him, since He is infinite; but He by an act of omnipotence could come down to us, could divest Himself of His royal robes of majesty, could lay aside His crown of glory and clothe Himself in our poor raiment of flesh and so come to our habitation and be our Spouse and make the Soul His Bride.

And all this He has done in order to convince us finally and effectually that He loves us. He wishes to be able to whisper with human lips to the soul, "Thou art all mine, O my Beloved." Such words of deep affection convince the soul that it is loved. When such words are spoken then the clouds of suspicion and misunderstanding clear away; they are burnt up by the blazing sun of love, which fills the soul with a radiance that nothing else can bring.

The Soul God's Jewel. And for this life of love my soul was created — just for this! My soul is God's treasure — committed to *my* safe keeping! I am God's banker. And my life-long care must be to guard the treasure carefully, to screen it from influences that might damage or sully it, from every breath of sin that might mar the exquisite beauty of its perfect bloom.

And I must do this because it *belongs to God*, as no other created thing does. For earth and its glory will pass away; the jewels of the midnight sky will lose their lustre; the streaming beauty of the material universe will one day fade; but the jewel of the soul

is to last for ever as long as God is God, because it is His own special and peculiar property and treasure.

The Heavenly Merchant. The soul is the pearl of great price which the heavenly Merchant sold all to secure for Himself. He set forth from His Father's home and gave up every other good thing — comfort, health, honour and life itself, to buy this pearl. Now, to realise that my soul is thus the object of the infinite solicitude of the great God will make me careful about its welfare. It is only God's special light (His supernatural grace) can bring home this truth to us; we must incessantly beg Him to make us understand it — not to leave us blind and hard-hearted, but enable us to realise the treasure in our keeping.

God's Human Tenderness. The wedding at Cana shows that Jesus does not wish to interfere with our innocent enjoyment: but rather wants to be in the midst of it all, along with His Mother. He wishes to show how ready He is to help on the mirth — even by miracle. This is surely a scene calculated to convince us of the tenderness, the human tenderness of God.

As He supplied wine in abundance to the young bridegroom and his guests, so He will supply me too with the wine of His consolations, not in drops but in torrents if I will.

Mary's Intercession. Now, note that He came to the rescue when the ordinary wine began to fail and at His Mother's request. So, too, in our lives Jesus will come and give us comfort, especially when earthly joys begin to fail, that is, in the hour of sad-

ness and trial and disappointment when the wine of pleasure is gone: and it will be at His Mother's request. She will turn to Him and say, "This soul, dear to me, has no wine of consolation — it is desolate and suffering." And Jesus will attend to His Mother's wishes.

St. John's Testimony. Almost the first public act recorded by St. John in the life of Jesus is this granting of a special, miraculous favour at His Mother's request; just as the last words He addressed to any living mortal were His tender words of farewell to Mary from the Cross, when He asked her to look upon St. John, the disciple whom He loved, as her son.

In the beginning of His public life Mary is thus found asking help for those in need; and at the end of His life she receives a mandate from her Son to undertake the same merciful work for His Church, to plead ever at the throne of Mercy for the wine of peace and joy and consolation for Jesus' friends. In giving her that commission Jesus appointed His Mother Queen of All the Saints.

For if the disciples whom Jesus especially loves are to be her children then she will be solicitous for them with all a mother's tenderness and love, and she will strive incessantly to secure for them a full participation in the supreme blessing which Jesus came to bring from heaven to earth, the blessing of perfect peace and union with God. Of that gift the Angels sang as they surrounded their Queen at Bethlehem on the first Christmas night. "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will."

The Saints Know. And Mary's children, her faithful clients know well and gratefully testify that their heavenly Queen and Mother secures for them in a wonderful way a deep taste of the peace beyond all understanding which Christ promised to His friends.

Ask the Saints of God and they will tell you; the Saints who are Mary's darling children and her crown of glory. IT IS BECAUSE MARY PLEADED FOR THEM WITH HER SON THAT THEY BECAME SAINTS: the graces that lifted them to holiness flowed through her merciful hands.

The White Flower of Lisieux. Ask the latest and most attractive of the Saints, Mary's little Carmel child, the white Flower of Lisieux; listen to her testimony about the joy and serenity she found in the Order specially dedicated to Mary's service which she joined with such gladness of heart when a girl of fifteen — just at the age when Mary herself began her marvellous life of union with the Man God. The "Story of a Soul," written by Saint Thérèse — that book that has so fascinated the world during the past thirty years — is the record of a soul tasting in deepest measure the peace of God, as it can be tasted only by those who have given themselves unreservedly to the Master's service.

Her Prayer to Mary. The Little Flower of Jesus tells us how she appealed to the Queen of heaven for grace to correspond with her vocation. In 1887 her father, Monsieur Martin, started with his family to visit Rome. From Lisieux they went to Paris, and Therese tells us that in that great city there was only one place she was really anxious to visit, namely,

the Shrine of Our Lady of Victories. She went there and begged the Mother of God to obtain for her the grace to enter Carmel soon and to become a Saint. Just forty years ago this child prayed thus at the Shrine of Notre Dame des Victories. We to-day can testify that the prayer has been magnificently answered: since we have recently seen the whole Catholic world thrilled with joy at the announcement that the young Carmelite nun had been raised to the altars as a Canonised Saint.

What Mary did for Saint Thérèse she can and will do for us if we approach her with the fervour, humility, simplicity and Faith of that favoured child.

46 QUEEN CONCEIVED WITHOUT ORIGINAL SIN

Thou art all fair. — Cant. ii., 2.

The Immaculate Conception means that Mary's soul was created in the state of Grace. It is not so with other human beings. When God's omnipotence creates the spiritual soul and unites it with the material element which will develop into the organised human body and will constitute along with the soul the complete substance which is man, at that instant and by that union the soul incurs the taint of Adam's sin. Man comes into being under the cloud of God's displeasure.

Exiled from God. An example will, perhaps, make the point clearer. Suppose a great and powerful

nobleman — like Earl Godwin in Saxon times in England — rebels against his King and on account of his treason and disloyalty is deprived of all his rights, privileges and possessions and outlawed from the kingdom, together with his family and all his descendants. He thereby loses for himself and for his heirs for ever, all the possessions, dignities and honours that belonged to him so long as he enjoyed his monarch's favour.

Hence his great grandson (for example) will be born into a state far different from that which would have been his had the Earl remained faithful in his allegiance. But because he turned traitor this child will find himself in poverty and misery, an outcast from the country that should be his native land, condemned to spend his life amongst aliens, not because of his own sins but because through his ancestor's crime the state of nobility and of royal favour was forfeited which otherwise he would have inherited.

Adam's Treason. Now Adam was God's great nobleman, raised by God's goodness and liberality to that position of divine favour and royal dignity which we call the supernatural state. He was guilty of treason, and lost for himself and his descendants all his supernatural privileges and graces and became an outlaw from God's kingdom. Under the ban of that outlawry all his descendants are born, exiled from that splendid inheritance that would have been theirs had their great forefather been faithful to his King.

This state of deprivation of God's grace or favour is called Original sin. It is not actual personal sin, but

it is the privation of a grace, a beauty, a splendour, a light without which the soul is dead in the eyes of God.

The New Adam. Jesus, the new Adam, came to restore that lost radiance to the soul of man, but His redemption must be applied to each individual through the Sacrament of Baptism.

But in the case of Christ's Mother a special exception was made; she was (through the foreseen merits of her Son dying on the Cross) exempted from the taint of outlawry that affected all other human souls. So that at no instant was her soul without God's sanctifying grace; she was created actually radiant with the light of God's Being, actually enjoying that participation in the divine Nature which St. Peter tells us constitutes the life of grace.

Our Life. This great privilege of the Immaculate Conception will help us to understand better the sense in which the Church encourages us to address Mary as "Our Life, our sweetness and our Hope." Those titles are truly applied to Mary because of the Babe she holds in her arms. We never think of Mary alone (as we think of Jesus) — she is to us always the Mother of Christ: and it is because she possesses so perfectly Him who is the Way, The Truth and The Life, that we address her as our Life, since she gives Him to us.

Our Sweetness. The name of Mother makes the most universal appeal to human hearts; it is the name that holds the sweetest memories and dearest associations for all mankind. The name of child, lover or wife may sometimes be sweeter or tenderer

for some, but it is only a fraction of the human race that ever taste the blessedness of deep parental or conjugal affection — whereas all know the sweetness of a mother's love.

Now Mary is one whom we address by this sweet name of Mother. Why? What right has she to this title? What right have we to call her mother? The reason is this: Mary is Mother of Him, who is our eldest Brother, of Him who by a divine act of condescension has adopted us all to be His brothers (if only we accept the offer) — has purchased the right of adoption for us by taking up our nature and in that nature shedding His Blood for us on the Cross: and who willed that in becoming His Brethren, we should share in all His good things, including the affection of His Mother. Jesus has identified Himself with the whole human race. Hence St. Paul calls Him the new Adam. And just as in Adam the whole race fell and was tainted with sin, so in Jesus the whole race rose again and was regenerated.

Mother of Mankind. Hence Mary, as Mother of Jesus, was also Mother of Mankind, Mother of that new, resuscitated, grace-clothed, grace-cleansed race that would be the fruit of Christ's Passion.

Hence Mary is our Sweetness. For it is sweet and comforting to think of her both as our own Mother and as Mother of Him who is the source of all the spiritual sweetness of life.

But then it is sweet also to think of Mary because she herself was the first fruits of this regenerating uplift given to mankind by Jesus. Jesus is sinless, stainless, holy with the holiness of God, but still a man, one

of our race, a descendant of Adam. And for His sake, because of His merit and dignity, all mankind is lifted up and placed on a level with God Himself (since Jesus our Brother is God); His Divine sweetness is to remove the deadly bitterness with which the sin of Adam had infected the waters of life. But first of all and more perfectly than any other, the soul of His Mother will participate in this divine and cleansing sweetness. The curse of Adam's sin will not touch her soul; she is to be the Mother, not only of Jesus, but of the sanctified race of which Jesus Christ, the new Adam, is head, and, therefore, she herself will be sanctified from the first moment of her existence. In this sense, too, she is our sweetness, the sweetest and most fragrant flower our tainted nature has ever produced, one of ourselves, but Immaculate.

Our Hope. And she is also our Hope, because she is our most powerful Advocate with Jesus. He has arranged it so Himself. In order that Mary may be our trusty Advocate two things are necessary. First, we must feel absolute confidence and unreserve in approaching her with our requests; and, secondly, she must be all-powerful to obtain the granting of our demands. See how wonderfully these things are secured for us. First, she is our Mother. There is no one in the world we can approach so confidently when in trouble as our earthly mother. The miserable, sinful, brokenhearted son who dares not lift his eyes in hope to anyone else will still turn with confidence to his mother. And the Church assures us that in Mary we have truly a Mother full of a mother's tenderness for us.

Mother of Omnipotence. But then also she is Mother of Jesus who is God. And, as Mother, she can command Him, can dare to exercise parental authority over Him who though omnipotent is obedient to her; who though the Divine Ruler of the universe is yet always a Child with her; who though He may protest that His hour is not yet come, yet in order to gratify her least wish forestalls His time and works a great miracle.

Yes, Mary is our Hope, and her Immaculate Conception helps to emphasise for us her position of power with God.

For sin is the one obstacle that hinders the soul in its access to God. But that barrier never existed for Mary. Here below we are unfortunately so accustomed to sin that we can hardly conceive what an absolutely sinless life is like — just as we find it hard to visualise absolute perfection in the natural order. But we know that when Mary's sinless soul turns to God with a petition, her prayer rises from a heart all ablaze with purest love, and, therefore, her prayer will never be refused.

47 QUEEN OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY

My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed. — Cant. iv., 12.

In reciting the Rosary we make a pilgrimage to the different scenes of Our Lady's life; and in each scene we find that the most suitable words in which to address her are those of the Angel Gabriel:

"Ave Maria, gratia plena! Hail, full of grace!"

Joyful Mysteries. At the Annunciation we come with Gabriel to greet Mary and tell her again the joyful news of the Incarnation and of her vocation to be God's Mother. She is to co-operate with the Incarnation and with the salvation of the world, as no one has ever co-operated or could co-operate, namely, by supplying God with His human body. Mary, we are told, was troubled when she first heard the Angel's greeting, but she is no longer frightened now, when she hears us repeating to her, "Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee." We congratulate an earthly bride on her wedding morning; we congratulate a religious on her Profession Day, when she becomes God's Spouse. This is Mary's Profession Day, the day of her Espousals with God.

At the Visitation we accompany Elizabeth to greet Mary and we use Elizabeth's own words: "Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." We see Elizabeth gazing with love and rapt admiration at the beautiful, radiant face of her young cousin and rejoicing at the extraordinary dignity bestowed upon her. Elizabeth knows that this is the Mother of the Messias: and regards herself as unworthy to receive such a visitor. "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Then she speaks of the miraculous rejoicing of the child in her own womb (St. John Baptist) at Mary's approach. And then she praises Mary's Faith. "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

Fullness. At the Nativity we come with the shepherds to greet Mary and her Child. And again we say: "Hail! Full of grace the Lord is with thee — now really blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the little Child at thy breast, for He is God Himself whom thou hast given to us." Mary is happy indeed, sure she can fasten her eyes on the Babe's face — the face of Him who created the stars that are winking above her in the winter sky.

At the Presentation we stand beside Anneas and we too address Mary. He told her of the future greatness of her Son — who is destined to be Light to the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel. But also he foretold her grief. And as we gaze we whisper: "Hail, full of grace — thou art chosen to share His passion so fully because thou art so closely united with Him in bonds of love."

At the finding in the Temple it is the Child Himself who addresses Mary. And we go there too and congratulate her because she had found Jesus and because He went down with her to Nazareth and was subject to her. "Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee in Nazareth, blessed art thou amongst all Mothers in having such a Son. And do thou speak to Him, Mother of us and our needs."

The Sorrowful Mysteries. During the Passion Mary does not appear except at the Crucifixion, but our thoughts are with her all the time (as were the thoughts of Jesus Himself). Her coming on the scene at the end is all the more poignant because although we see her only at the very height of the tragedy we know she has been agonizing all through in secret.

And here, too, we address her as Blessed, because she is the Mother of Him whose sufferings are saving the world and winning back God's honour.

In His agony in the Garden Jesus is with Mary because His thoughts rest upon her as His one supreme comfort in the sea of misery that overwhelmed Him. Her perfect salvation makes atonement for His crushing grief.

By the scourging at the pillar Mary's stainless innocence was merited and as we contemplate the terrible scene our thoughts keep reverting to His Mother, knowing how she sympathised with Him in all this dreadful pain.

So, too, at the crowning with thorns. He who is thus crowned in mockery is Mary's darling Boy. That is the terrible human element which God allows to be present in order to win our sympathy. Mary is His Supreme Lover; and she is our representative loving and comforting Him in our name. She is suffering inexpressibly and yet hers is a unique honour, to be the Co-redemptrix of the world, sharing (as none other) the bitterness of the Passion of Jesus.

And so we again say: "Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee still in His hour of gloom and sadness and shame, sharing His pain with thee."

Calvary. During the carrying of the Cross Mary meets her Son and joins the sorrowful procession to Mount Calvary. In the fifth mystery, when He is hanging on the Cross, Jesus speaks to His Mother: "Woman, behold thy Son." And we say to her: "Hail! full of grace, blessed art thou because thou art now the Mother of all the faithful." Mary's new mis-

sion begins to-day. At Jesus' word she adopts as her own children all His friends and disciples. This is another Annunciation, telling of a new dignity and new responsibility laid upon her; it is Jesus' own lips tell her of the great family she has to mother.

"Hail! thou who, even more perfectly than when Gabriel spoke to thee thirty years ago, art filled with grace, the Lord is with thee by His omnipotent word bidding thee adopt His disciple to be thy child. He has given thee the great commission that will mean so much for the salvation of souls, to be a Mother to those He loves." And as their Mother she will intercede for them and will have unlimited power with Him to obtain graces for them.

Thus, during the Sorrowful Mysteries we try to comfort Mary by our greetings, reminding her of the great work the Passion is to accomplish. "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, especially in His Passion, on account of the golden harvest of souls He will reap."

Glorious Mysteries. Then we turn to Mary rejoicing in the Resurrection of Jesus and we congratulate her because of His glory. Now, indeed, is she blessed amongst women in having such a Son, who is Victor over sin and death. Had you met Mary Magdalen coming from the tomb on Easter Sunday morning after her first glimpse of the risen Jesus, you might have exclaimed as you saw her gleaming eyes: "Happy those eyes that have beheld the Master in His glory!" How much more may we cry out to Mary: "Happy Mother to gaze upon such a Son, to see thy own darling Child so radiant with glory, enjoying such a unique triumph!"

At Christ's Ascension, that is at His departure from earth to occupy the throne of glory that is His at the right hand of God, we may surely rejoice with His Mother. Just as we congratulate an earthly mother on the elevation of her son to some high dignity, so we congratulate Mary. "Hail! full of grace, God is with thee, God is favouring thee in glorifying thy Son so wonderfully."

Pentecost. At the coming of the Holy Ghost Mary is present and receives the outpouring of His gifts in fullest measure. Jesus *merited* the coming of the Holy Ghost for us. The Holy Ghost could not come to us until sin had been atoned for, since the Holy Ghost comes with sanctifying grace. And Jesus merited the Holy Ghost especially for His Mother. Just as an earthly king bestows rich jewels on his dear friends, especially on his wife or mother; so God bestows the priceless jewels of His gifts on His Mother. And we congratulate her on the high honour she has received.

And then, with the fourth glorious mystery, death supervenes. Mary's earthly career is over and she begins her intercourse in heaven with Jesus, her Son. And first she is assumed body and soul into heaven. We rejoice in her exaltation, and more exultingly than ever we cry: "Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee now in the beatific Vision, giving thee eternal peace and happiness." But her happiness is greatest because of the glory of Her Son. "Blessed now is the fruit of thy womb, who is seated for ever at God's right hand."

Queen of Heaven. Finally comes her Coronation

as Queen of Heaven. This means that Mary is not only saved, but that she is honoured by God *above all His creatures*, made Queen of Angels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and all Saints. And this because she is *His* Queen, she is His Mother. *He*, as man, submits to her, and, therefore, all other creatures must do likewise. It is the logical result of the divine Motherhood. The opening mystery, the Annunciation, explains the final mystery of the Crowning in heaven. Now we can apply with new and fuller significance the words of Gabriel's address: "Hail! full of grace, who art crowned as heaven's Queen. The Lord is with thee, lifting up thy soul to the beatific Vision, producing in thy soul the marvels of His omnipotence and enabling thee to do great things for the salvation of souls. Blessed art thou amongst women in heaven: and blessed now in His royal dignity is the Son whose power has wrought such great things for thee."

Thus in thought, when reciting the Rosary, we follow the process of Mary's elevation, first to be God's Mother, to be Co-redemptrix of mankind and then to be Queen of Heaven, ruling over the souls that have attained the beatific Vision through the merits of her Son. Her story is the story of the most perfect triumph ever won by God's grace in any of His creatures. Is it any wonder then that the Catholic Church, with her supernatural insight, encourages her children in reciting the Rosary to contemplate this great soul working out her perfect salvation, living on earth a life of love and devotion, dying a death of bliss: and whilst sharing the glory of her Son in

heaven, stooping to accept the fragrant roses of prayer which her children on earth present as a garland which she delights to wear?

48 QUEEN OF PEACE

On earth peace to men of good will. — Luke ii., 14.

This title, Queen of Peace, was added during the great war by Pope Benedict XV., and is now, by order of Pope Pius XI., a permanent part of the Litany. It is an appeal to Mary to save the world from the scourge of war, an appeal to the Mother of Him who is King of Peace, who came to give Glory to God and Peace on earth to men of good will.

In order that true peace should reign in the world it is necessary that Christ's principles should triumph, that wrong principles, false ideas and doctrines should be driven out of men's hearts. To bring about the victories necessary for the triumph of Christ's principles, the Church has ever appealed to Mary for help, and many feasts and titles of Our Lady commemorate the victories she has secured. Thus in the Litany the title, "Queen of the Rosary" reminds us of the triumph of Christian prayer and principles over Islam at Lepanto in 1571. The title, "Help of Christians," commemorates the triumphant entry of Pope Pius VII. into Rome in 1814, and his final though long-delayed victory over the despotism of Napoleon.

Feast of the Holy Name of Mary. On 12th Septem-

ber the Church celebrates the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, which is a festival in honour of Mary Queen of Peace, that is, of Mary helping to secure the stability of the world by securing the triumph of Christ's principles. The feast of the Holy Name of Mary had been instituted in Spain in 1513 and was extended to the Universal Church in 1683 in honour of the Victory of John Sobieski, King of Poland, over the Turks at Vienna in that year.

Sobieski. The city of Vienna was besieged by an enormous Turkish army of about a quarter of a million men — and the people of the city were praying earnestly to Our Lady for help. The Emperor Leopold had fled, and Louis XIV. of France (sad to say) was dissuading Sobieski from coming to the rescue. But John Sobieski marched out bravely with an army far inferior in numbers, about 70,000 strong. At a Shrine of Our Lady he stopped to pray for help, and on the 11th of September arrived at the Kharenberg heights above Vienna. He heard Mass next morning and then gave battle. At first the result was doubtful, but the shouts of the Germans and Poles as they called out the name of Sobieski, told the Turks that the great Northern hero was on the field; they lost heart and fled, and the city was saved. This victory removed all danger of a Turkish invasion of Europe. Sobieski marched into Vienna and went to the Church and prostrate on the ground ascribed the victory to God. To Pope Innocent XI. he wrote: "Veni, vidi, Deus vicit." "I came, I saw, God conquered." Then the Pope appointed the feast of the Name of Mary to be kept by the whole Church

on the 12th September, the day on which the victory was won.

This feast is, therefore, a perpetual memorial of the Church's debt of gratitude to Mary for securing for her children the blessings of Peace.

The Church and Islam. The struggle between the Church and Islam, which has gone on for the last 1200 years, is a type or symbol of the battle for existence that is for ever going forward in individual souls. Our daily life is a struggle for the saving of our soul from enemies that constantly assail it. Now, who are the Turks that are for ever swooping down upon or beleaguering the soul with intent to destroy its peace? They are our passions and evil inclinations; they are the temptations of the world, its allurements that draw people away from God and his service; they are snares of the devil, who is ever plotting our ruin.

And, unfortunately, those enemies of the soul are often only too successful in their attacks. Just as Islam overran Spain and Austria and Poland, so also spiritual enemies overrun the territory of human souls and tear them away from allegiance to Christ. Hence it is that we come across cases of people giving up the Faith, utterly neglecting the practice of their religion, turning away from God on some pretext or other.

Our Lady of Victories. But then, on the other hand, we meet notable cases of conversion, of people rising up against the tyranny of temptation, conquering sensuality, worldliness, the spirit of revenge, ambition, pride. How do these victories come about?

They are to be ascribed almost always to Our Lady's intervention. Mary's watchful care of the soul secures its victories.

If you look back over your own life you will find it to be so; when you rose superior to selfishness, when you were successful in resisting human respect, pride, sloth, or some other passion, it was the result of devotion to Mary — a victory won by her in the cause of true peace of soul.

Meaning of the Name. Why do we honour the name of *MARY?* The name of Mary stands for all she is, for all the graces and favours she has received from God, and in rejoicing in her name we rejoice in her incomparable gifts. The name Mary, the Hebrew Miriam, is given to only one woman in the Old Testament, namely, the sister of Moses. She was born in Egypt, as were her brothers, Moses and Aaron; hence some suppose the name to be of Egyptian origin. But most probably it is Hebrew, and signifies the Beautiful or Perfect One. And we can see at once how suitable it is to Christ's Mother. Just as Jesus received His name by divine appointment, because it signifies "Saviour" and tells of the work He will do for mankind: in like manner Mary is so called because she is God's "Perfect One."

Conclusion. The practical conclusion to draw is this: In every danger and trouble invoke the holy name of Mary. Just as John Sobieski marched to victory and broke for ever the power of the Turks by calling on the name of Mary and in the strength of her protection; so we too shall march to victory if we confidently invoke her name and rely on her

help. Always pronounce her name with great reverence. Each time we recite the Angelic Salutation we pronounce her name twice: "Hail Mary; holy Mary."

St. Bernard. Let us conclude with the fervid words of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his sermon on Our Lady:

"O you, whoever you are, who feel yourself tossed about on the stormy waters of life and exposed to all its violent tempests, turn not your eyes away from the shining of this bright Star of the Sea, if you would not be overwhelmed by the storm. When a hurricane of temptation sweeps down upon you, and your ship is drifting on to the rocks, look up at the Star, call upon Mary. When buffeted by the billows of pride, of ambition, of bitterness, of envy, look up at the Star, call upon Mary. When anger or avarice or the allurements of the senses have beaten in upon the ship of the soul, look up to Mary. If you are crushed by a terrible burden of sin, if you are appalled at the foulness of a guilty conscience, if you are terrified at the thought of judgment, if you feel yourself sinking into an abyss of sadness, a whirlpool of despair, then think upon Mary, call upon her holy name. Following her you will not stray, invoking her you will never lose hope; thinking of her you will make no mistake: under her protection you need not fear; under her guidance you will feel no fatigue, and with her help you will win the victory. And so you will learn by your own experience how truly it is said 'The Virgin's name was Mary,' how rightly she is called The Star of the Sea, Mary Queen of Peace."

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